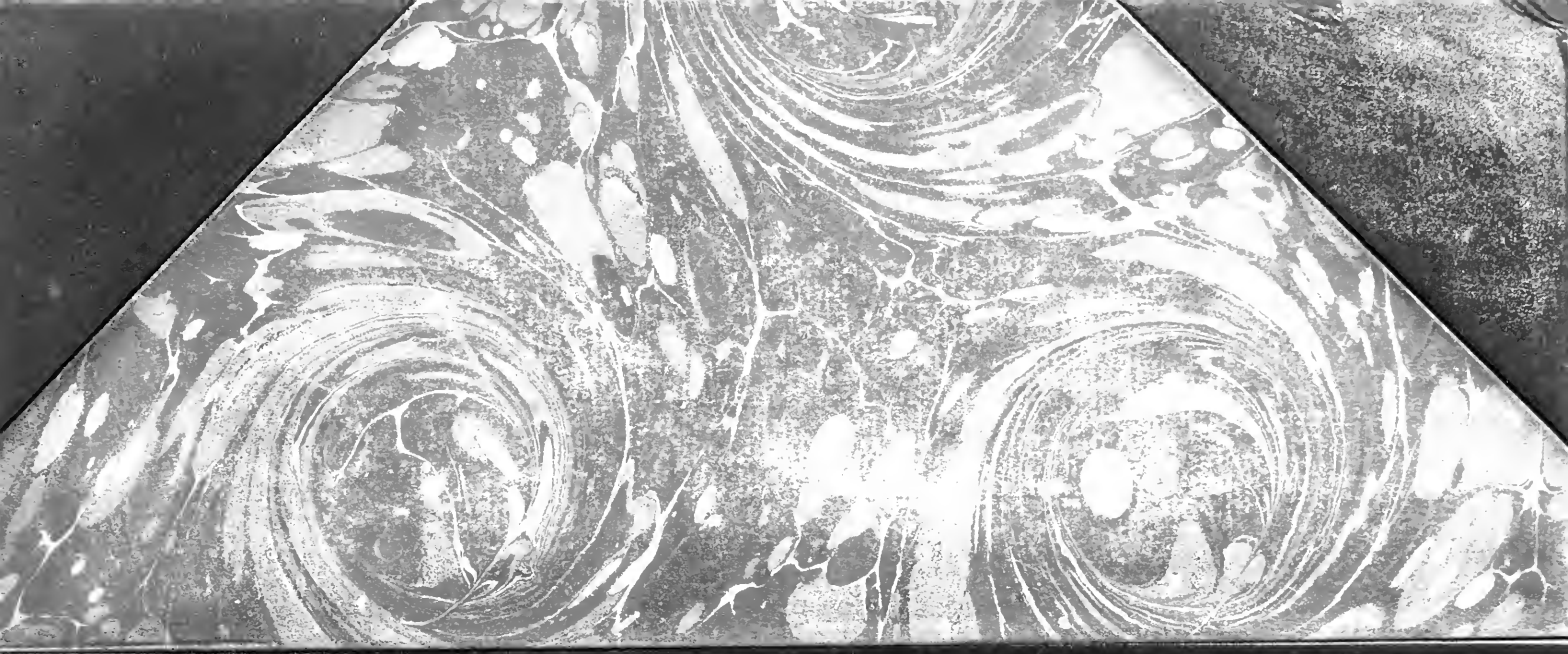

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THIRD SERIES.

VOL. II.

SHACKELL AND BAYLIS, JOHNSON'S-COURT.

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SKETCHES FROM LIFE.

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VOL. II.

LONDON:

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COUSIN WILLIAM.

CHAPTER XII.

Woman's heart
Was never won by tales of bleeding love;
'Tis by degrees the sly enchanter works,
Assuming friendship's name, and fits the soul
For soft impressions, ere the faltering tongue
And guilty blushing cheek, with many a glance
Shot inadvertent, tells the secret flame.

WHITEHEAD.

It was in the one and twentieth year after this auspicious marriage, (it being then the "merry month of May,") that I next saw Lady Terrington. She was in her box at the Opera House—I recognized her in an instant—for time had worked but little change in her personal appearance; indeed at the distance whence I viewed her, with the advantages of candlelight, and perhaps the slightest touch imaginable of rouge, she appeared but very little altered. her figure, as far as I could judge, remained as

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symmetrical as ever—and her flowing hair wantoned as wildly over her snowy forehead, as it did when I had last seen her. At the time of which I am now speaking, she was turned nine and thirty.

In her air and manner I saw an evident change—it might have been in the eyes of some, an improvement—to me the amendment was equivocal—the hesitating faltering timidity of the blushing girl, was exchanged for the easy and assured confidence of the admired wife—vivacity had taken place of diffidence, and the downcast look of innocence, which I had a thousand times worshipped in her early life, had been bartered for the worldly exercise of the eye, which talketh many languages.

At her side sat a lovely girl—an unearthly looking creature, whose exquisitely feminine charms were displayed to what she no doubt considered the very best advantage; but to *my* mind, half their effect was marred by the studied exhibition, and her evident consciousness of the possession of them; at first I thought this might be Caroline's daughter—but I found that Lady Terrington had only one child, and that one, a son.

Behind Lady Terrington's chair, in the obscurity of the box, I saw a man, whose features I perfectly recollected—he wore the glittering decoration of the Bath, and a silken "score" of services, upon which were displayed the ribbands and badges "in little" of several foreign orders. Time, and his campaigns had given a mellowed tint to his complexion, and the fine features, which in youth had been so indelibly impressed upon the heart of his innocent cousin, were even improved by the change they had undergone—this was Sir William Morley, K.C.B., &c. &c. &c.

Before I proceeded to make myself known to Lady Terrington, I applied myself to an excellent friend of mine, the popular Major Entick, a man whose talents and acquirements, however striking, are not more estimable than the kindness of his disposition and the excellence of his temper; who is, as it were, a peripatetic Court Guide; an animated peerage; a living record of the times.—The major speedily illustrated, and with that forcible delineation of character for which he is so justly celebrated, presented me with the *carte du pays*, by the study of which, I was to regulate my future operations in Sir Mark's family.

It seemed then, that so long as one and twenty

years before the period of which I am now speaking, Morley, (with whose arrival at Stamfordleigh, a *little too late*, the last chapter ended,) being in communication with his friend, the legal adviser of his rival, confessed to *him* his determination still, if possible, to win Caroline from the arms of his rival. Allsford, placed by this confidential disclosure, made only the morning before the marriage, in the most delicate possible position, suddenly retired from Stamfordleigh, as the only step he could take without compromising either his honour or his friend; and Morley having been detained week after week at Portsmouth, by contrary winds, and being ordered up to the Horse Guards on duty, took advantage of four and twenty hours leave of absence, to make one more desperate dash for his Dulcinea.

That he *was* too late, the appearance of the bride upon her progress convinced him, and he hastened back to town, and thence to Portsmouth, whence in due time, the wind having got round to what sailors call "the nor'rard," he took his departure for the West Indies, leaving Lady Terrington in the arms of her favoured lover and faithful husband, fully impressed with her cou-

sin's unconquerable affection for her, and sick at heart with grief and mortification at her own credulity, and Sir Mark's consequent success.

A woman, however full of passion and feeling, however enthusiastic and ardent by nature, married to a man, without one corresponding quality, whose taste, pursuits and sentiments in no degree accord with hers, and whose mere excellence itself is insipid, enters upon a married life under the greatest disadvantages; vibrations are only caused by concords, and the want of that activity which a congenial disposition would excite, begets in the husband a distaste for what he imagines the constitutional indifference of his wife to all his pursuits, and to all surrounding objects; this induces in time a corresponding indifference in him, and thus their existence is passed without either having a fair opportunity of judging or appreciating the natural character of the other.

But when to this negative indifference on both sides, is superadded the positive existence of a prior affection upon one, the results may easily be anticipated. Caroline Crosby had gone through the marriage ceremony at Stamfordleigh with tears in her eyes, through which beamed the loved image of her cousin William:

piqued and angry, obedient and indifferent by turns, she considered her beloved lost, herself abandoned; and she rushed headlong into the gulph with the desperation of a suicide. The actual appearance of Morley, so shortly after the conclusion of the ceremony, served only to make her situation more deplorable, her misery more certain; and with an unfortified mind and ill-regulated conduct like hers, the shock she had received paralyzed her feelings past all hope of recovery; she became little better than an automaton, dressed up to go through the prescribed duties of her station, with one sole object absorbing all her cares and all her thoughts—her eyes were constantly fixed on this bright sun of her idolatry, and when compelled to withdraw them temporarily, everything around her, appeared confounded in one mass of obscurity.

An event occurred, however, which promised to divert her attention and divide her interest; before the expiration of a twelvemonth she became a mother; and the delight with which she caressed and clasped her infant in her arms, was the first really warm and natural feeling that had animated her since her marriage—an object had presented itself, which by the laws of nature was inestimably dear to her, and although even her

delight at pressing her baby to her bosom was qualified by one sad thought, still in the tender assiduities which the helpless child required and received, she found employment, pursuit and excitement; and Terrington himself felt his cheek glow with pride and satisfaction, when he saw his beautiful wife engaged in the duties of a mother, and anxiously watching the health and growth of her beloved little William—for so she had induced her husband to allow *his* son to be christened.

From the birth of this boy, Caroline's character seemed entirely changed—he was the object of her undivided affection—of her unremitting solicitude. The child was beautifully handsome, and finely grown, and although inheriting from his mother genius, vivacity and talent, was, as might naturally be supposed, completely spoiled before he was seven years old.

Nature it appeared had not blessed the Terringtons with any other children—and the boy thus possessing the undisputed affections of both his parents, must have turned out the most hopeless dunce that ever lived, had not his grandfather, (who knew a little,) insisted upon his going to Eton—thither, after a considerable struggle with his fond mother, who appre-

hended that he might get his nose scratched, or one of his eyes poked out, or that some other dreadful accident would befal him, during his progress through a public school, he was sent; and there he remained, until he proceeded to Christchurch, whence he betook himself to the continent, from which, having passed some time in making the tour of Europe, he had returned to England about a month or six weeks previous to my recognition of his mother at the Opera.

"And who," said I to the major, "is that sylph-like creature with Lady Terrington?"

"That," replied the major, "is the beautiful Flora—a cousin of Sir Mark's, who has for some time been living with them—she is rich, and *on dit*, amiable, and evidently intended to be the wife of William Terrington."

"And Sir William Morley?" said I, inquiringly.

"Oh, *ma fois*," said the major, "that's perfect—a brilliant career of success on the continent, consummated and concluded at Waterloo—a patent of baronetcy—Commandery of the Bath—Grand Cross of the Guelph—Tower and Sword—Black Eagle and Red—There is nothing going that can beat Morley."

"This is new to me," said I.

"So it seems," said the major—"it is new to you, I suppose, also, that he is generally imagined to be Sir Mark's assistant."

"I don't understand," said I.

"No! why the thing speaks for itself," answered the major, "he is the family bodkin.—In the social journey through life every couple now-a-days has its bodkin—its tame man—things can't go on in this world without it—as Terence says—

"Quam multa injusta ac prava fiunt moribus!"

You seem quite unsophisticated. Sir Mark is one of those observant persons, who sees the weak points of his neighbours as soon as any man; but to his own he is as blind as a beetle—Morley was the first, the favoured lover of Lady Terrington. She accepted Sir Mark for the sake of his money and his title, and bartered *her* fair hand for *his* red one—whether even voluntarily or not, nobody knows. There's the fact—desperately in love with one man, she marries another; and the former having added to all his other fascinations those of glory and notoriety, returns to England, and becomes the inseparable companion of his first love's husband—eh?"

"Aye," said I; "but Morley, is her relation,

and I conclude, may have an affection for Caroline without——"

"Platonic?" said the major—"don't believe it, the thing can't happen."

"But living on terms of friendship with Terrington," said I, somewhat alarmed at the insinuation of the major—"I—"

"What says Sallust," cried the major,—'Idem velle et idem nolle, ea demum firma amicitia,'—now, therefore, if Sir Mark and Sir William happen to——"

"For shame, major," said I, "what! do you mean to insinuate that he would betray his friend in *that* manner?"

"I grant it shameful," said the major; "but how is a man to betray his enemy in *that* manner?"

"I admire your badinage," replied I—"because I know it to be only badinage—it is lucky, however, that our women are taught to consider the violation of the seventh commandment somewhat more seriously than our men—for under the present regime *they* seem to treat it with terrible indifference."

"And yet," said the major, "I cannot understand the great difference in their feelings,

for whenever a man violates that commandment, you'll admit I suppose that a woman must violate it too. However," continued he, " I don't profess to lecture on morals, I am only stating facts —you, however, have known Lady Terrington all your life—I say nothing—but to *me* her husband seems to pique himself upon throwing temptation in her way, or rather leaving her in the way of temptation—de gustibus— "

" And pray," said I, sure of information, " what has begone with the Crosbys?"

" They have shuffled off this mortal coil," replied the major: " Mrs. Crosby was bled to death accidentally by her husband, who cut smack through an artery one evening by mistake—and the survivor died of an ounce and a quarter of oxalic acid, to which he had helped himself, instead of a similar quantity of Epsom salts. The house and place were sold, and have been, I believe, converted into an agreeable retirement for persons of large fortune, whose intellects happen to be unsettled."

" You know the Shillitos?" said I.

" Not to know them," answered the major, " would argue myself unknown. Colonel Shillito died on the Peninsula—Juliana Shillito has formed a romantic attachment for a married

nobleman, (who shall be nameless) and of whom, it is said, she is to have the reversion—she is, however, of course, somewhere here with her mother, who, though seventy-two, contrives, with the aid of Deleroix, Gattie, Madame Maradan, and Mrs. Lloyd Gibbon, to make up something like a ghost of her former self, and may be seen every alternate Tuesday and Saturday under this roof."

"And Sir Ferdinand?" said I.

"Upon my life," said the major, "I don't know what has gone with *him*—I rather think he is dead, but I am by no means certain."

"And the young lady with Lady Terrington," said I, "is a Miss——"

"Ormsby," said the major: "she is absolutely hunted by a pack of admirers; but, as I told you before, it seems a perfectly understood arrangement, that she is to have the honour of becoming the daughter-in-law of your old friend, Lady Terrington."

"Sir Mark," said I, "is not here, I suppose?"

"No," replied the major: "he divides his time pretty equally between his hounds and his bed-chamber; one half of the year he hunts, and the other half, he is laid up with the gout; but she is the life and soul of the house, and

whether he be ill, or absent, or even present, which is still more remarkable, she contrives to diffuse radiance around the whole circle."

At this period of his description, the major was whispered away from me, by a first-form dandy, who evidently was applying himself in the same way that I had done, to the same living book of reference, for some interesting information, and I again cast my eyes towards the companion of my early days, Caroline: there I beheld the eloquent smile, the head averted from the public gaze, the silent, yet intelligible glance towards Morley, while two young men were plying the gentle Flora on either hand, with all those pleasing nothings, which, as I have said before, come to something in the end, to which she appeared as perfectly indifferent, as if she had been that, which she closely resembled—a beautiful statue.

"I see Morley is in his old place," said a voice close behind me—it was that of a tall thin man, squeezing at a funereal pace down the pit; the words were addressed over his shoulder to a short, fat person, with grey eyes and white mustachios, who was following him down the alley.

"Of course," said he, "where else should he be?—the needle to the pole—the ivy to the oak—the shadow to the object—Sir William to Lady Terrington."

"What are you saying about Lady Terrington, Burly?" said somebody behind him, touching his friend gently on the arm.

"I was saying," replied Burly, who coloured like scarlet at the moment, "how extremely handsome your mother was looking to-night."

His mother!—I turned instantly, and saw before me a fine, elegant young man, his countenance beaming with animation and expression, his figure aristocratic, his manners frank and unaffected, his air noble and unembarrassed, and his whole contour at once striking and prepossessing. It was Caroline's son.

The common yet inevitable reflection of "how time flies," flashed into my mind, and in an instant a thousand circumstances of days long past, floated in my imagination—I felt an anxious desire to speak to him—I looked at him with a marked attention, such as I thought might induce him to notice me,

or even call for an explanation of conduct, which, under any other circumstances than those in which I was placed, might have seemed very like incivility; but the unfortunate construction of my features rendered me unable, I suppose, to convey the expression with which I meant to illuminate them, and William Terrington casting a look of vacant indifference full in my face, pushed on, and followed the stream of fashion.

It was clear to me, ignorant as I was of the *scan. mag.* or even the small talk of the town, that there must be some serious *on dits* in circulation, touching the character and conduct of my fair friend: however, as I have a tolerably quick eye in such matters, and can see as far as any of my unmarried neighbours—(the married ones are all blind)—I resolved neither to be prejudiced by the whispers, nor influenced by the sly looks, and hems, and nods, of my friend, Major Entick, but to proceed the following morning to her ladyship's house, where I knew I should be welcome, for "auld lang syne;" and where I might, perhaps, be serviceable in rescuing her from perdition, and her family from misery, if I had not arrived too late.

I put my plan into execution—found Lady Terrington at home, was admitted, and received as I expected—but oh! how changed, how sadly changed, was my poor Caroline—approximation and daylight, although the rooms were blinded and curtained almost into twilight, told the sad tale; her figure remained, as I saw indeed the night before, all grace and symmetry, but the sparkling eyes, which I had left beaming with joy and splendour, although still bright, were full of thoughtfulness and care, which the smile that played on her lips could but ill conceal—a steadfast look fixed on my once well known countenance—a sudden shrinking—almost starting at nothing—a deep drawn sigh—indicated a mind full of worry, of inquietude, of unhappiness.

Upon one subject she spoke with warmth, energy, and enthusiasm—her son. She described him to me most maternally—depicted him as everything that was honourable, high-spirited, generous and accomplished; recurred to the anxieties of her past life in everything concerning him, and entreated me to dine with them that very day, that I might make his acquaintance; "for," added she, "he is so sought, so courted, and so

universally popular, that with all the attraction of *his* home, it is but seldom we have him amongst us."

"Where his mother is," said I, affecting a gaiety, which, in truth, I felt not, "any home must be attractive."

"That was not what I meant," replied Lady Terrington: "there is a young and lovely creature here, a ward and relation of Sir Mark's, whose heart has long been William's, and to whom, I believe, he is devotedly attached—theirs, however, is not the ardent, romantic love, which in *my* young days lovers felt, or professed to feel; they have been brought up much together, their attachment is habitual, founded on long acquaintance, close intimacy, and constant intercourse; the delay in their marriage is occasioned by a wish of Sir Mark's that William should be of age before he marries, a desire created or strengthened by the contingent fate of some legacy or inheritance, I hardly know which —I long for the period to arrive, for—I,—" she paused and coloured visibly, even through the artificial dye which too evidently stained her cheeks, "I think it quite cruel to delay their happiness."

"Sir Mark," said I, "is a sad invalid."

"Yes," said Lady Terrington, "and like my poor father, fancies himself worse than he really is—the gout has soured his temper, and he is absolutely peevish and out of humour with the merest trifles,—he has no serious disorder."

There was a moment's pause in the conversation,—Lady Terrington stopped. The tone in which she communicated the last fact appeared to me so equivocal, that I found it quite inconsistent with my notions of decorum, or any chance of gravity, to pursue the subject farther —luckily, the lovely Flora Ormsby at that moment entered the room; and never certainly did brighter vision burst upon the sight of an admiring mortal.

I never saw any thing half so fascinating. A profusion of richly dark brown hair, parted on a forehead of snow, hung carelessly, in ringlets, round her beautiful face, and the maiden-blush tint of her downy cheek, suddenly flushed into bloom by the unexpected appearance of a stranger, gave to a pair of dark blue eyes, sparkling amidst their long black lashes, an expression so lovely, so unearthly, that, for an instant, I almost doubted whether it were a human being that stood before me.

Lady Terrington introduced me to the sylph, who was at first retreating (vanishing would be almost a better word) from the room—introduced me as one of her oldest, earliest friends; and although it must be confessed, that there is neither anything very attractive in my exterior, nor *that*, in my personal appearance, which is likely to engage the attention of one so young and beautiful as Flora Ormsby, the lovely Fay was gracious beyond measure, and proceeded to converse upon all subjects, with an ease, fluency, and archness, which the purity of her looks had not quite prepared me to expect.

After a good deal of display of "knowingness," I beg pardon for the word, but I have no better at hand, (for it was not knowledge of the world that the sprite possessed) she was disporting into an elaborate ridicule of some honest gentleman, whose father having been some kind of tradesman, or merchant, and whose mother not having been admitted into Almack's, was set down as an incognizable person, when a servant announced Captain Plantagenet, and Lieutenant Charlemagne, two extremely handsome, well dressed, sweetly smelling young

men, whose names were quite sufficient to establish their rank, and whose appearance seemed the signal for an entire change of manner in Lady Terrington and the animated Emily. Her ladyship, who carefully chose a seat with her back to the light, in one instant became a perfectly metamorphosed personage — the generous good nature with which she chatted with an old friend, was suddenly altered into a sort of die-away, languishing manner—a subdued whisper, an affected sensibility, and a tone of sentimentality as little accordant with Caroline's real nature, as the whole display was, with the character and situation of a woman, who had a son of twenty "or so" staring her full in the face. I felt an involuntary shudder at the masquerade performing before me, and turned to the unsophisticated girl, whose *naïveté* had just before charmed me; but I found the change simultaneous and sympathetic—the blue eye of the baby girl, which rolled and revelled in all the luxury of innate mirthfulness, while no captivable object was present, now was ordered by its mistress into all the sinkings and languishings of the finished coquette. Lady Terrington rubbed her dark arched brows to shew her white

hand, stretched out her foot to shew her delicate ancle, talked strangely to shew her wit, and in an instant, almost wept over the sufferings of the Greeks to shew her philanthropy.

And these two women did *this*, to captivate Captain Plantagenet and Lieutenant Charlemagne, although one was an affianced bride and the other the wife of a fond and worthy husband, and mother of a fellow six-feet high and twenty years of age; who, moreover, was engaged to be married to his mother's friend and present companion.

But I was doomed to see stranger things yet —the boudoir door again opened, and Sir William Morley entered *sans ceremonie;* then for a moment Lady Terrington's eyes beamed fire, and Flora Ormsby gave a holiday to her constrained features.

He recognized and coldly enough noticed the noble blood which was encased in the two frail frames of the captain and lieutenant of the Guards, and having bestowed still less notice on me, established himself on a chaise-longue, with that sort of imperturbable determination to remain where he was, that I felt anxious

only to know who was to go first and leave the bashaw, whose handkerchief it seemed quite needless to throw, in full possession of the fairy palace of my once unsophisticated Caroline.

"How is Terrington this morning, Caroline?" said Sir William.

"Oh, just the same," said her ladyship; "how is *your* head-ache, William?—did you do what I prescribed last night—that eau de Cologne——"

"Upon my word, I did," said Sir William; "but although you did what you said, I don't think Mrs. Davis understood you—she is absolutely getting old—I—"

"Come," said Plantagenet in a whisper to Charlemagne, "are you going?"

No answer was given, save a practical one, and the dandies were on their legs in a moment.

Lady Terrington, and Miss Ormsby, who had thought it quite worth their while to shew off in private all the little engaging frivolities of their nature before Morley's arrival, to catch these popinjays, and make them look and lan-

guish in their turn in public, were now perfectly ready to give them egress, and not a word more was said—before Flora had rung the bell, the beaux made their bows and departed.

"Have you had Orestes and Pylades here long, Caroline?" said Sir William.

"No," replied her ladyship, "about five minutes before you came in."

They had been there at least three quarters of an hour.

"What an advantage it is to Plantagenet," said Morley, "that Charlemagne is so fond of him."

"Friendship is a charming thing at all times," said Lady Terrington, looking at Morley, "isn't it, William?"

"Yes, but in *their* case, everything," said Morley; "the association makes them both: Plantagenet by the side of Charlemagne makes Charlemagne look beautiful, while Charlemagne by the side of Plantagenet makes Plantagenet appear almost rational."

"They are both dreadful bores," said Flora.

"Good God!" thought I, as I gazed on the vestal-looking creature, and saw that when she uttered these words she looked as beautiful, and

as entirely sincere, as she did a few minutes before, when she was languishing on those very two men, and praising all they said, and admiring all they did, "is *this* what I am to expect in the young women of my country after twenty years absence from it?"

"The Duchess of Petersfield," was announced.

"Good Heavens, Caroline!" said Sir William, starting from the sofa on which he had been *horizontalizing*, "why on earth do you let this old woman in—upon my honour, nobody else does."

"I gave no orders," said Caroline, (to *me* apparently trembling under the fear of offending Sir William Morley, by admitting any person proscribed by him,) "she certainly *is* the most abominable person imaginable."

"Oh, the detestable creature," said Flora.

"Cat," said Sir William, "that's the only word, Flo."

"My dearest Duchess," said Caroline, running up to her grace as she entered the room, "how delighted I am to see you, although perfectly ashamed to look you in the face, for I——"

"Don't mention it, dear Lady Terrington," said the duchess, who appeared to me to be a remarkably good looking and well mannered personage. "I know all your engagements, and all your worries, only if I *had* had an answer I should have known what to do."

All this evidently referred to something past, in which, knowing nothing about it, I felt no great interest, and having already pledged myself to dine with her ladyship at seven, I took the opportunity of her grace's arrival to retreat; but not before I had seen Miss Flora Ormsby second the warm reception given by Caroline to the woman she professed to hate, by receiving with positive humility on her cheek an apparently cordial kiss, which her grace condescended to bestow; and Sir William take her grace by the hand, with every expression of pleasure and respect; such evidence of his feelings being bestowed upon a lady, upon whom, at the very mention of her name, he had one minute before vented the coarsest and most unequivocal abuse.

All this I saw—but knowing the world pretty well, I had seen it all without surprise, perhaps with something like saturnine satisfaction, as illustrating doctrines which I myself had incul-

cated, and corroborating evidence of popular frivolity and insincerity which I had already admitted into my mind; but I had seen in the twinkling of an eye *that* which pained my heart of hearts—I had seen the indisputable unequivocal influence of William Morley over Caroline Terrington—*that* made me tremble.

I had watched Lady Terrington's manner with the two scions of most noble stocks, and there were all the languishings, all the fixed looks, the affected abstraction, the throwings-up of eyes and the throwings-down of eyes, which one of these hackneyed coquettes (for such I soon suspected my once unsophisticated friend to be) perform as regularly as soldiers their manual exercise: it was a code of trickery which, if she had not known that I knew her, she would even have played off on *me*, with my grey hairs and tottering gait: it was what she had been doing I clearly saw for years before—delighted to entrap, and ensnare, and inveigle a swarm of hopeless flatterers, who priding themselves more on the reputation of an intrigue, than the *real* conquest of a woman, will condescend to dance attendance upon one of these painted, heartless automatons, merely for the honour of having it

thought that *they* (what a glorious plurality!) stand well with *it*.

This, however, occurs only in certain spheres of life—in the middling classes such things never happen—in those, a woman flirts to the best of her ability, makes assignations at a second rate milliner's, gets a "drive out" in a dennet on a fine day, and carries on her affair in the public boxes of the playhouses, or in little junkettings with her good man and his friend, and generally confines herself to some one devoted thorough-going swain (at a time) managing her matters, while the plodding husband is posting books in his accompting house, or mending pens and reading the newspapers in his office—and all this is done in the easiest and quietest manner imaginable; for the insignificance of the parties renders their detection, if not impossible, at least wholly uninteresting to anybody but themselves. But with Lady Terrington the case was different, she was an object—all eyes were on her —and yet to *her*, since truth must be told, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty-five, and of her ladyship's age the fortieth, the great object of life was to have a train of dangling Lancers, languishing dandies, and sigh-

ing simpletons paging her heels, ready, for a gracious smile or a kind look, to commit all sorts of tom-fooleries in her ladyship's behalf.

This I thought silly enough; a woman in *her* circumstances might have done better—the rising tucker, the increasing robe, more become the age, or at least the *state* of the modest wife, and prudent mother, than the bared bosom, and the scant drapery in which she exhibited her fragile form—but these are mere matters of taste, with which virtue I believe has nothing to do —but I *did* see *that*, which staggered me.

There *is* a look (all men can read it if they will) which such a woman gives, and which however fine the artificiality with which she generally leers and languishes—speaks volumes to the worldly mind; it has not in it, the die-away affectation of the coquette, it has not in it, the subdued bashfulness of the novice; it has *that* in it which is indescribable, but which never yet was exchanged between man and woman, however momentarily, without convincing *me* of the actual state of their acquaintance.

Bid me describe the forked lightning quivering through the angry clouds—bid me depict

the flowing torrents of Vesuvian lava chasing each other down the sides of the hellish mountain—bid me paint the lurid vapour glimmering over masses of corruption—I am unequal to the task—so am I unequal to express, *that*, which I know and recognise, the instant it flashes upon me, in the certain look of understanding between a married woman and the friend of her husband—that look I saw exchanged between Caroline Terrington and William Morley.

CHAPTER XIII.

'Tis not to make me jealous
To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,
Is free of speech, sings, plays and dances well;
Where virtue is, these are most virtuous.
Nor from my weak merits will I draw
The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt,
For she had eyes, and chose me.

SHAKSPEARE.

I CONFESS when I got to my hotel I was quite undecided, whether to return to fulfil my engagement to dine at Sir Mark's, or send some civil excuse for staying away. I had seen enough of the domestic politics of his family to induce me to do the latter, as far as my own comfort or happiness might be concerned; but having seen so much, I experienced some anxiety to see a little more, with a really ingenuous disregard for my own ease, and a feeling somewhat better than impertinent curiosity.

No medicine is pleasant, at least none that I have ever tasted; and although Caroline's long probation at Crosby might have afforded her an opportunity of deciding to the contrary, I suspected that the medicine which seemed to me absolutely necessary for the preservation of her mind's health would prove most unpalatable of all—I mean counsel and advice. I still hoped that even yet, her proceedings might only deserve to be characterized as incautious and imprudent. I knew that she once had a regard for *me*, and an habitual respect inculcated in early days for my opinions and suggestions; and difficult as I also knew the management of anything like an interference in domestic affairs to be, I still thought that if I could so far gain her confidence as to induce her to speak upon conduct and circumstances, which I intended her to see by my manner I considered incompatible with the duties of her station; I might improve upon the opportunity thus afforded me, and exert all the influence I flattered myself I yet possessed, to rescue *her* from disgrace, and her amiable husband from dishonour.

I resolved, therefore, upon fulfilling my engagement, and shortly after seven found myself

again in the house of Sir Mark Terrington. Lady Shillito was there, looking a perfect hag —her cheeks were painted deep crimson, her neck and bosom (exposed like a girl's,) by the force of powdering assumed a "lily hue;" mock curls hid the furrows of her forehead, and wantoned in all their artificial stiffness beneath a turban of gold tissue, which she wore upon her ancient head. Juliana, grown quite matronly in her look, was less finely, but much more strangely dressed than her old and by no means venerable mother: cameos and intaglios were stuck all about her, and one arm was graced with a Burmese bangle just imported, while the other displayed an armlet made of pieces of polished lava from Vesuvius. All her blueness had turned to a melancholy sort of grey, and she had become a most enthusiastic and believing craniologist, and when I entered the drawing-room I found her exploring with infinite care, and to the evident annoyance of the young lady (whose ringlets suffered most woefully in the search,) the head of Flora Ormsby, in order to ascertain whether the organ of philo-lithographiveness, was powerfully developed over her left temple, Miss Ormsby having just before

incidentally observed that she thought lithography a beautiful branch of the art.

The Shillitos seemed to forget me, and it saved me a world of trouble—they were not the objects to which I wished to devote my observation, and I felt quite relieved by the shortness of their memories.

Sir William Morley arrived soon after me, but as it seemed, only from some other part of the house—no announcement preceded his appearance, no portal's thundering told his coming—I shortly after found, that when he was in town he lived altogether at Sir Mark's. I thought I could trace in the bright eyes of Lady Terrington, in their rapid flight from Morley's countenance to mine, (where they rested for an instant,) caution to *him* to be less particular in his manner to *her* than usual; and a look of palliation to me, and a sort of assurance that I should find him a very agreeable person, and a favoured friend of her husband—it was but a momentary glance, but glances may be read quickly, and construed off hand.

At length came William Terrington, whom I had only seen in the Opera pit: he was indeed a noble fellow—more like his mother than I

at first thought him. His eyes were hers, merely transferred—his manners were extremely winning, and the unaffected warmth with which he received me, as the old friend of his family, was as gratifying to me, as it appeared genuine in him. I confess I thought I saw something like reserve in his conduct towards Flora Ormsby, and even fancied an over-acted civility in his address towards Sir William, which perhaps struck *me* the more forcibly, as offering a powerful contrast to his conduct towards myself.

Two or three men, whom I had never before seen, added themselves to the party, and a Mr. and Mrs. Delmaine, who were waited for some time, completed the circle; still I saw nothing of Sir Mark, and began the tormenting course of conduct, which I secretly had determined to pursue, by inquiring of his lady where the baronet was.

"Poor Sir Mark," said her ladyship, "we shall find him in the dining-room—he is so completely a martyr to gout, when the fit is on, that as soon as the attack announces itself by any of the unerring symptoms peculiar to it, he establishes himself in the library, which opens

into the dinner parlour, and remains stationary on that floor until he recovers."

"And sleeps there?" said I.

"Yes," said Lady Terrington: "he has a bed put up in the small room beyond the library, which gives him the opportunity of receiving his friends during his "lay-up," and of dining with *us*, which, if he were confined up stairs, you know would be impossible."

I terminated my inquiries for that time—but my eyes, I suppose, ceased not to speak when my tongue did—they rested but the hundredth part of a minute on Caroline's face, and what the expression conveyed by them might have been, I know not—she blushed crimson.

Dinner was announced—it seemed understood that I was to lead Caroline down stairs—I therefore did what it appeared expected I should do.

As we went down, she said in an under tone—"I think you will be surprised to see how much Sir Mark is altered since you last saw him."

"In person?" said I.

"Yes, I mean in person," said Caroline, "what else *could* I mean?"

"Nothing," said I—"only since the march

of time is certain, such changes are to be expected; on hearts and minds the waste of years has but little effect."

We were at the dining-room door—Sir Mark was already seated in a wheeled chair on one side of the table. As I entered, he held out his sound hand to me, (for one I observed was disfigured by chalk-stones,) and gave me a cordial greeting; but truth to be told, he *was* altered—more than I had anticipated, even when I spoke on the subject the minute before; his red cheeks were now blue, his light hair was gray, and scant—his figure, always inclined to plumpness, had lost in shape what it had acquired in bulk, and as he sat ensconced in his black leathern carriage, a decrepid victim to disease, my eye suddenly travelled to the animated countenance of his wife, and I thought—no matter what.

"You are a good deal altered, my good friend," said Sir Mark, looking at me good-naturedly after I had taken my seat. "Less hair on your head—eh?—more flesh on your bones—I have often observed, that where there is a disposition to fat, it shews itself as a man gets older—do you think *me* much fatter?"

"Much the same," said I. This was, per-

haps, not true; but since I perceived none of the alterations in myself, which were so very visible to my friend, I thought I could do no better than let *him* enjoy a self-blindness, which I confess I should have been just as well pleased if he had not attempted to cure in *me*.

"Caroline is much the same," said the baronet.

"I literally see no change whatever in *her*," said I.

"We are none of the changeables," said Sir Mark—"are we Lady Shillito?"

"No, Sir Mark," said her ladyship—"as poor dear Sir Ferdinand used to say—*semper eadem*."

Her ladyship by this apposite display of her latinity effectually settled one point for me; the mild and endearing manner in which she referred to her husband, convinced me that he had quitted this life, since I was perfectly sure that nothing but the respect which the jester tells us rescues even dead small beer itself from censure, could have induced her ladyship to bestow such affectionate epithets upon her spouse.

William Terrington, who sat at the bottom of the table, had on his right Miss Shillito, on

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the left Miss Ormsby—the latter, however, was placed next one of the beaux who had arrived late, and who evidently was not aware of the engagement which subsisted between that young lady and the heir of the house, for anything more pointed or direct than his attentions and compliments to his lovely neighbour I never beheld. She received his fluent addresses with a somewhat too worldly ease to please me—answering him in an under tone, without raising her eyes towards him, and scarcely moving her lips; a performance which seemed to *me* less like the downcast modesty of innocence, than the practised skill of a waterman, who looks one way and pulls another. I thought William Terrington appeared rather dissatisfied with all their proceedings; he broke his bread into crumbs, and eat the little pellets with an earnestness ill adapted to the pursuit—I saw what was passing in his mind, and asked him to drink wine.

I turned my head towards the upper end of the table, and found Sir William Morley actively engaged in some apparently interesting conversation with Lady Shillito, and unperceived by the parties, saw Lady Terrington bestow

some of her sweetest looks upon another of the unknown dandies, who was sitting just below—they were drinking wine together, and the expression of her countenance, and the apparent devotion of her gaze upon this very fine gentleman, struck me with a mingled feeling of pleasure and disgust—disgust that a woman should thus play the prostitute with her eyes, and pleasure to think that it was the habit of a coquette only, and did not perhaps imply the criminality of which, when I saw her display of "silent eloquence" in the morning with Sir William, I did most certainly believe it an unerring symptom.

The dinner went on—and again upon another occasion, I saw the same display of looks—the same mechanical sweetness bestowed upon a second beau; I became somewhat more assured of Caroline's folly and vanity, and proportionably easier on the score of her criminality.

"Pretty affair this, Sir Mark," said Lady Shillito, turning from Sir William to mine host. "Have you heard Lady Di Sibthorpe has actually left England with Lord William?"

"Lord William!" exclaimed Lady Terrington—and her eye instantly fell on Morley—their looks met.

"Why," said Sir Mark, who was eating an ærial mountain of soufflée, and could hardly speak fast enough to get the start in giving an opinion upon the subject—"that is neither new nor strange, Lady Shillito, for the affair *eclated* two days since."

"Sad thing," said Lady Shillito: "what will become of the three children?"

"The organs of amativeness," said Miss Shillito, "were strongly developed in Lady Di—and so was the organ of philo-fugaciousness, which together blended, perfectly justify the result."

"I'll tell you what, Juliana," said Sir Mark, wiping his mouth, "I can better tell you what perfectly justifies the result, than you can tell me—the way in which Lord William and she have been going on, for the last year or two—Sibthorpe must have been as blind as a beetle not to have seen their proceedings, for nobody but himself could doubt for a moment how it would end; but I have often observed, that in such matters, those most deeply concerned are the last to notice such conduct."

I looked at my friend when he had concluded this *observation*, to be assured whether he were merely favouring us with a general remark, or whether, decrepid as he was, and in his own

house, he was not preparing to follow up the speech by some immediate act of hostility towards Sir William Morley, who, during the whole of his harangue, had been affecting to admire a bracelet on the arm of Lady Terrington, practically ascertaining the value and weight of the stones of which it was composed, by poising them upon his fingers, an operation, which however convenient to conceal a little natural embarrassment, which the discussion, I suspect, occasioned, appeared, to a curious observer like myself, to bring the hands of the gallant officer, and the said lady of the house, into a juxta-position which might just as well have been avoided.

"Sibthorpe is old enough to be her father; isn't he, Sir Mark?" said one of the beaux.

This, I confess, struck me to be a particularly bad shot, but evidently unintentional.

"He is about *my* age, I think," said Sir Mark, as innocent as a lamb.

"And Lady Di," said Juliana, "is about as old as Caroline, I think."

And all this they said, perfectly unconscious that every word they uttered, was completely applicable to the case then in progress before

their own eyes. Such, however, is human nature, and such the happy construction of our minds, that we go on ridiculing the personal imperfections of others, whose deformities are beauties when compared with our own; censuring follies in our acquaintance, which we ourselves are daily perpetrating, with a high idea of their merits; and holding up to contempt and indignation, vices and intrigues, while we are daily committing precisely the same faults, believing our own cases exceptions to general rules, and flattering ourselves, even though our conduct should produce similar results to those, which we abhor and detest in others, that *we* have been ourselves victims, and led into the commission of all manner of vice, upon the impulse of feelings originating in sentiment and virtue.

"But," said Flora Ormsby, (for all the ladies seemed resolved to have a peck at poor Lady Di; as wild birds fall foul of a tame one, who having broken the bondage of gilded wire, tries her flight at liberty,) "Lady Diana was considered a great flirt before marriage."

Mrs. Delmaine, the lady with her back to the fire, sitting next Sir Mark, appeared to rouse herself from the sweet listlessness in which

she was eating curaçoa jelly, and laying down her spoon, lifted her glass to her eye, and stretched forward across the plump figure of the invalid to catch a look at the fair orator—having looked, she let the glass fall, and resumed the spoon.

"I hope," said William, "that is no serious imputation, Flora—most young ladies have a turn that way."

"Oh, but I mean," said Flora, looking rather confused—"I mean——"

"Flora," said Sir Mark, "no lady is ever expected to explain her meaning."

A saying of the baronet which certainly relieved Miss Flora Ormsby.

Sir William Morley invited me to take wine with him—I saw immediately after the ceremony, an approving look bestowed on him from head-quarters, whence I concluded I was more indebted for the mark of attention, to the conciliatory suggestions of her ladyship, than the spontaneous affection of Sir William—the anxiety to excite a favourable opinion of a man in her friends, being one of the surest marks of a woman's love.

To say truth, Sir William was no acquaint-

ance of mine, and it so happened, that during his great intimacy at Crosby I was not in England, so that we had never met in society that I know of; his military career I found had been most splendid, affording a bright example of that heroism and high courage which characterize those of our young men of fashion, who in the ball-room or boudoir appear unable to withstand a draft of air from a lady's fan, and seem incompetent to the labour of an English dance—put these men in situations, assailed by hunger and fatigue, toiling through miry roads, climbing the craggy steep, sleeping on turfy couches, whose only canopy is the blue sky, braving the pelting storm, charging the out-numbering foe, and amidst the toil of honour sharing the homeliest fare with their fellow men, and drinking the stagnant pool to quench their burning thirst—see *then* what they do—see how the chivalrous spirit, and the ardent mind, buoy up the sickening bodies and the wearied limbs of our brave soldiers, and lead their fearless followers to victory and glory.

Of this class was the soft, insinuating William Morley; he served but a short time in the West Indies, when his regiment was ordered

home; from England, where it remained some time, it moved to the continent, and there, with his good sword, he cut his way to rank, to fame, and honourable distinction.

During the peace he had lived much abroad—indeed, it was on the continent he renewed his acquaintance with Caroline; but such was his reputation, that he was almost immediately appointed to a distant command, whence he had now only returned a few months, I believe; during which period, as it appeared to me, he had been established under the hospitable roof of our mutual friend, Sir Mark Terrington.

I confess during the remainder of the repast, where everything said by certain persons, was said for effect, and everything done, was done with a view, or an intention; I was labouring under such a complication of feelings, some extremely painful, and others so provokingly comical, that I was very glad when the ladies retired, and Mrs. Delmaine, who appeared a perfect stranger, and Lady Shillito, led forth the female procession to the drawing-room.

After their departure, Sir William assumed the head of the table, and with an extraordinary shew of courtesy, invited me to the seat next him—an invitation to which, it seemed I was not

sufficiently alive to secure the proffered place, since Mr. Delmaine, who, indeed, in course of promotion, had a right to it, but who evidently was a "horror" of Sir William's, placed himself at the side of the gallant baronet.

I soon discovered that Mr. Delmaine was a rich merchant, who delivered his dicta upon mercantile affairs in a tone of thunder—and that neither the matter of his conversation, nor his manner of delivering himself, was at all consonant with the gallant baronet's notions of the agreeable—to be sure, Mr. Delmaine had said but little during the presence of the ladies, but he made ample amends for his previous taciturnity, by developing to us at length the details of an expedition to St. Petersburgh, illustrated by an account of the relative value of Russian and English commodities, repeating, nearly verbatim, all the proper names of the most respectable houses of business in the trade—immediately followed by the most satisfactory history of the progress of a despatch across the continent, which it had been worth his while to forward, to announce the ratification of some commercial treaty—including, not only the name and character of the courier, but the name of the inn in every town, where

he changed horses, together with the precise charges of the journey; all of which being duly concluded, he entered into a discussion with Sir Mark on the advance in barilla, and the fall in madder; at which period, I followed an example set by one or two of the party, of stealing off, which I did in the most masterly manner, and reached the drawing-room in perfect safety.

I found—although but the third to abdicate the table, that I was the fourth man up stairs, inasmuch as I perceived Miss Flora Ormsby assiduously engaged in a new flirtation with a tall, gaunt, long-legged person, whose appearance was particularly unprepossessing, and whose vacancy of countenance was fully supported by awkwardness of manner and newness of conduct; but still Flora Ormsby's eyes were frequently raised from the "interesting downcast," to the "attentive observant," on his unmeaning features; all he said—which, to tell truth, did not appear to be much, seemed to be of a deliciously poisoning quality to the virgin's ear. I never had seen her look so animated, or interested at what was going forward, at any other period of our very short acquaintance.

The trite "de gustibus" came upon my tongue, as I saw the unquestionable marks of preference which she was bestowing upon her present companion—and recollected the qualities and appearance of my young friend, who was still below stairs, doing the honours of the wine, and perforce listening to Mr. Delmaine's mercantile diaries.

"What do you think of William?" said Lady Terrington, making a sign of invitation to me to sit beside her on a sofa.

"I have seen but little of him," said I, "but he appears to me all that a fond mother could wish."

"He *is* all I can wish," said Caroline; "his affection for me—his devotion to me are unparalleled—he has been my only comfort and blessing through life."

"Indeed," said I, "that is almost ungracious to poor Sir Mark, whose kindness I———"

"For God's sake," said her ladyship, "let me implore you do not enter upon subjects which cannot be treated lightly at a time like this. I am going with Flora to Lady Castleton's assembly, and afterwards to a Mrs. Leverett's ball in Berkeley-street, and I want a stock of good spirits to take with me; discus-

sions, reflections, retrospections, all tend to evaporate my volatility, and so—some other time—some morning—we will talk over old affairs."

"Good evening, Lady Terrington," whispered Mrs. Delmaine, advancing to the sofa for the purpose of taking leave.

"Good bye," said Caroline with all her native warmth, which had no more effect upon her frigid guest than a sunbeam upon an iceberg—"Are you sure your carriage is here?"

"Yes, thank you," said the trading lady, and proceeded down stairs to obey a summons from her husband, who being unprovided with an amplitude of the nothingnesses, so essential in general society, declined the honour of joining the ladies, and left Sir Mark with William and Morley, and one visitor, who, fancying himself vastly snug where he was, preferred taking his coffee and chasse below.

"Flora," said Lady Terrington, arousing her cousin and intended daughter-in-law from a fit of listening, into which she had fallen by the side of the human Ourang-outang in whose deformities she seemed to delight, "it is time for us to go—it is past eleven—the carriage is ready."

Flora Ormsby rose and quitted the room.

"Are you going to Lady Castleton's," said Lady Terrington to the well-dressed yahoo, who approached her when Flora departed.

"I can't go yet," said he, "I must be back at the House of Lords—there are some enormous debates to-night. I heard one or two of the speeches, and came up here for half an hour, for I did not understand what it was all about, only I have promised my uncle always to vote for the Roman Catholics because it is liberal. I always vote for *them*, and for instructing the lower classes; they seem to me to be both very good things, for its very hard upon a poor man not to know as much as I do."

I thought so too.

—"And so," continued his lordship, "I told my uncle I would certainly go down and vote, for he is never satisfied with a proxy; and I cannot disappoint him, because I think he means to give me a grey pony which I have taken an enormous fancy to, and if I disoblige him, why I sha'nt get it."

The mystery was now solved.

The yahoo was of the equestrian order—no less a personage than an English earl. Now I

began to see how the affairs of this intriguing family were carried on, and that Flora Ormsby chose, reversing the adage of having two strings to her bow, to have at least two beaux in her string. Not that it appeared to me that she confined her attentions; for such was her mode of flirting, that she seemed little more than the passive recipient of addresses at any time; although, in her intercourse with the Earl of Leatherhead, I must admit that there appeared more of the give-and-take spirit than usually characterized her proceedings in any other quarter.

His lordship just waited till Miss Ormsby returned, and then took leave; and Lady Terrington having inquired whether the party below stairs had broken up, and finding that still one stranger tarried, proceeded with her fair charge to the carriage, which was to convey her to Lady Castleton's, not omitting to leave word for her son and Sir William Morley whither they were gone.

I handed them into the chariot, and then paused to consider what I should do; when, finding myself unequal to any further investiga-

tion of the proceedings of this worldly community, I wrapped my cloak round me, and stepping into my cabriolet, directed my servant to drive me home.

CHAPTER XIV.

Force, or the will of our imperious rulers
May bind two bodies in one wretched chain,
But minds will still look back to their own choice.
So the poor captive in a foreign realm
Stands on the shore, and sends his wishes back
To the dear native land from whence he came.

ROWE.

I HAVE so often seen the ill consequences of meddling in the affairs of families, that it cost me little reflection to make up my mind never to repeat my visit at Sir Mark's, unless indeed some unexpected circumstance should cause me to be specially summoned to his house—and upon the consideration which I held due to the subject, I felt this abstinence from his society, and that of his lady and her friends, the only course I could properly pursue.

The doubt which agitated my mind was, in how far I was regulated in my decision by sel-

fishness, and how much of actual duty I abandoned for the sake of my own tranquillity: for I was not indifferent to what was going on—I was convinced that ruin impended over the head of Caroline—I was equally convinced, that without the intervention of some saving hand, it must fall, and *that* speedily; but then I dreaded lest by agitating the suspended sword too roughly, the thread might be abruptly broken, and the dreaded consummation accelerated. What I hoped was, that it might be possible to let her see the trembling glaive under which her throne of vanity was established, and drive her, like Damocles, from the paltry gratification of a base and unworthy passion by the fear of consequences.

But then what right had *I* to take upon myself the office of Mentor to a well grown gentlewoman of forty, whose intellects were quite as good as my own—whose knowledge of the world was perhaps better than my own, and who, for all I knew, might have long before perceived the pendant weapon, and laughed at its perils. The selfish part of my feelings in the business, consisted in the apprehension of incurring her hatred, and the hatred of her hus-

band; for such is the nature of meddling, and such the reward of intruders with advice or counsel in such matters, that the officious dabbler who puts himself out of the way to do his friend service, is just as cordially detested by the husband, whose honour he would secure, as by the lady whose reputation he wishes to preserve.

Upon thinking all this over, as I said before, I came to the resolution of not calling at Sir Mark's—for I was certain if I saw such scenes passing before my eyes, under his roof, as those which I had witnessed the preceding night, I should be compelled to speak to *her*, although from the grave manner in which I had been reproved, for some allusion to matrimonial happiness, I knew the subject would not only be painful, but that its discussion would probably end in a serious quarrel between us; and yet in abstaining from visiting there, I indulged a secret hope, that she would, after a time, require and insist upon some explanation of my reasons for such conduct. *Then*, I felt it would be possible to tell her my motives, and my opinions, because they would then be called for, and consistency on my part would compel the explanation—but to volunteer a lecture to a

being all grace, gaiety and elegance, in the midst of her career of fashion, flirting, and frivolity—if nothing worse—I saw was to be baffled in my object, and make myself despised and abominated by the whole circle, without doing the slightest service to those whom I wished to benefit.

A few days elapsed, a kind note from Caroline greeted me, wondering where I was, why they had not seen me. Would I dine with them on Wednesday, to meet half-a-dozen delightful people?

Answer—engaged.

A day or two afterwards, another kind invitation.

The same reply.

Two days subsequently, I found on my table the cards of Sir William Morley and young Terrington — this struck me forcibly as a manœuvre of Caroline's: at once, I regretted to feel, mean and artful—yet worldly as were its characteristics, I hailed it, as ominous of a desire on her part for something like an explanation of my shyness—the trick itself spoke volumes. Sir William Morley, of course, did nothing respecting *me*, without her lady-

ship's commands, or at least suggestions: she wishes *me* to like him; she begins to suspect that I disapprove of the terms on which he lives in her house; she desires him to call upon me, and make the amiable; but lest *that* should carry with it an appearance of improper influence over him on *her* part, she sends her son, a living hostage for her reputation, and makes the generous, high-spirited youth unconsciously vouch for his mother's character, by visiting the respected friend of her youth, in company with her admitted paramour.

I sketched out all this in my mind in a moment—perhaps illiberally; but if events be to be judged fairly by consequences, I was not very wide of my mark in suspecting that a short time only would elapse, before I was called on for an eclaircissement of my "strange behaviour."

On the Sunday following this "visit," I attended divine service in one of the fashionable chapels at the west end of the town, which (as I did not know,) Lady Terrington always frequented: I had not been long seated, when I beheld her ladyship and Miss Ormsby enter the sacred place, enveloped in white lace, and white satin, and white swansdown, and proceed

to one of the best situated, and most elegantly fitted up pews in the building;—the service began, and although my thoughts were, I hope and trust, fixed on better things, my eyes rested upon *her*, in whose welfare I felt an interest so deep and engrossing. She hid her face in her hands, and on her knees seemed absorbed in the holy service of the church: at her side knelt the lovely creature who so soon was to be her daughter-in-law—I watched them —I felt convinced that all my fears were vain, my suspicions groundless, and that the manner and conversation to which I had, over-scrupulously perhaps, attributed levity and guilt, were merely habitual, and that folly, not vice, actuated her in their adoption.

In the midst of their devotions, and some time after the commencement of the service, two men, to me unknown, but evidently of high rank, from their air and appearance, the servile attention of the pew-opener, and the advantageous situation of their seat, entered the gallery, immediately commanding Lady Terrington's pew. When this occurred I saw the innocent Flora Ormsby, kneeling in the presence of her Maker, with all the outward shew of

piety and devotion, nudge her future mother-in-law, to communicate the fact that Prince Somebody and Colonel Something, his Equerry and Phusalophagus, were come, and saw my once single-minded Caroline raise her beautiful eyes to the place whither this bit of information had directed them; nor was it difficult to perceive that the looks were habitual, and that an interchange had been long before established between the illustrious personage above and the beautiful hypocrite below.

How many women may reproach themselves with using the house of God as a place for worldly assignations, I cannot venture to surmise; but from the frivolous observations and idle remarks upon person and dress, which half the congregations of London (as well as those smaller assemblies in the country to which I have already alluded) make after the conclusion of the service, I apprehend that attendance at church is considered as a merely *proper thing*, and that the whole duty which it is necessary to perform is fulfilled by that attendance, although during its continuance the mind is occupied with silent criticisms upon finery and folly, or on characters and circumstances which are to

break out into eloquent descriptions and satirical remarks at its conclusion.

In quitting the chapel, Caroline and I met. Her ladyship was standing on the steps waiting for her carriage, but in conversation with the illustrious personage before-named, while his distinguished attendant was making the amiable with Flora, and all the canaille were gazing at the Prince.—Pray let it be perfectly understood that it was no English Prince.—Caroline's eye caught mine; but knowing *etiquette* too well to notice her ladyship while in the society of royalty, however humble its pretensions and confined its dominion, I took advantage of that little piece of *bienséance*, and passed down the steps. I was, however, foiled in my retreat, for I had not proceeded fifty yards, before I heard footsteps behind me, and turning round perceived close at my elbow one of her ladyship's footmen, who, breathless as he was in the chace, announced his lady's desire that I would stop one moment till the carriage should come up, as she wished most particularly to see me, and would drive after me as soon as it arrived at the door.

What could I do—play the Joseph and fly?

—It was impossible—besides, the servant, dutifully holding his lady's wishes to be commands, and not imagining the possibility of a refusal on my part to comply with her expressed desire, waited behind me *tête-à-tête* with his tall cane, to mark the object at which her ladyship's coachman was subsequently to drive; as buoys are placed by smugglers over sunken goods to make the finding easy.

Accordingly in a few moments I beheld the gay equipage of Lady Terrington making for me at a most aristocratic pace; and before I could well arrange my mode of playing the difficult game I had in hand, I was at the door of the carriage.

"I have caught you at last," said Caroline. "Where on earth do you hide yourself, you most odious of all living creatures?—how *do* you do?—I cannot scold when I see you, but I assure you I am seriously angry with you, and so are we all—you have quite deserted us."

"I was very unfortunate in being engaged when you did me the kindness to invite me," said I.

"Will you dine with us to-day?" said Caroline, "you'll meet nobody but Sir William."

"I thank you—I am particularly engaged to-day," said I.

"Why, you are always engaged," said Flora Ormsby.

"And *you* always engaging, Miss Ormsby," said I foolishly, not knowing exactly how to get out of a difficulty which I found every moment more closely entangling me.

"Come," said Lady Terrington, "name your own day."

This settled it—but even yet I hesitated.

"Well," continued she, "I'll tell you what you had best do, be sociable and get into the carriage, and I'll set you down wherever you like.—Here—open the door, Sir," said her ladyship to one of the servants; "*now* I think, Flora we *have* caught him.'

There was something so natural, so *naïve*, and so good-natured, in short so like herself in all this proceeding, that I could not resist her practical invitation, nor did I stop to inquire in what direction they were going to pursue their course, until the carriage stopped at Sir Mark's door.

"You are at home," said I.

"Yes," said her ladyship; "we'll have some

luncheon and a little chat, and then Flora and I will navigate you through the intricacies of the New Road along the Serpentine, which I suspect will be to you, as much of a novelty as a voyage to the North Pole."

It seemed impossible to refuse to enter the house, and as I was "*in* for it," I put the best possible face on the matter, and handed the ladies from the carriage.

Caroline and Flora led the way up stairs to the drawing-room, and I followed, mortified, yet not surprised that her ladyship had neither mentioned Sir Mark's name during our little drive, (*I* purposely avoided speaking of him,) nor sought him in his sick chamber on her return home—I resolved to wait and ascertain how long I should remain under his roof, without hearing whether he was worse or better, or even in existence.

Caroline rang the bell, taking that opportunity to look at herself with scrupulous attention in the glass, over the fire place; by the aid of which, she smoothed her eye-brows, tampered with a small bouton which had no business on her chin, and re-twined her jetty ringlets, with her snowy fingers. A servant appeared.

"Is Sir William out?" was the question which greeted my ears.

"Yes, my lady."

"Dear, how provoking," said Lady Terrington. After a pause of some half score seconds, during which the man held the door in his hand, as if doubtful whether anything more was required of him, she added, "Tell them to send up luncheon, I am going out immediately."

The man retired.

"Flora," said her ladyship, "where can William be?"

"I can't imagine," said Miss Ormsby.

"He called on you, did he not?" said Caroline, turning to me.

"Your son?" said I, "yes."

"I did'nt mean William Terrington," said Caroline; "I know he called too—but—but—we were speaking of my cousin."

I made no reply; but when I looked towards Caroline, her eyes were fixed on me.

"Flora, dear," said her ladyship, "do be kind enough to see if anybody is with Sir Mark, if there is not, we will go down and see him before luncheon."

He is alive, thought I, at all events; Flora

immediately obeyed—for when these two beings were with *me*, over whom no victory was to be gained, of whom no conquest was to be made, they were as natural and unaffected as possible.

The door closed, and Caroline and I were left alone.

Neither of us spoke, but her look convinced me that the silence would soon be broken—How I longed for the arrival of the luncheon, or the return of Miss Ormsby, or for something which would avert what I was sure, if we were alone five minutes more, was inevitable—some kind of allusion to the conduct I had recently observed, and my motives to it.

I stood absolutely trembling—Caroline approached me, and took my hand—hers was as cold as ice—she looked me stedfastly in the face—I was paralyzed.

"I know what you think of me," said she, in a half whisper, pressing my hand fervently as she spoke—her look was haggard—her eye sunken—the marks of coming age were betrayed by the workings of her passion—paleness overspread her countenance, and the bought paint looked hideous as it glared upon her death-like cheeks.

"I know," said she, in the same subdued tone, "why you stay away—but you are mistaken."

The rattling of the door announced an arrival —I had no time to reply—it was clear she was aware of my feelings and suspicions—still more clear that the matter would not rest here, and that I had been entrapped into the very snare which I had hoped to escape, and that I was doomed, if not the advising friend of the family, at least to become the confidant of the lady.

In an instant, the well trained features of Caroline, whose misery and wretchedness of heart shewed themselves for a moment, resumed the sprightliness which usually characterised them; and Flora's answer that Sir Mark had company, was received with ease and something like composure; but the struggle was too much, and she left the room abruptly.

"Lady Terrington is not well, surely," said Flora.

"She complained of head-ache," said I, trusting to the known sympathy of the sex for the speedy flight of my fair friend to her assistance, for I had no spirits to talk, and least of all to a person with whose manners and conduct, lovely as she was, I was not particularly charmed.

"I cannot imagine where Sir William is," said Flora, paying no sort of attention to my observation about Caroline's head-ache; unless, indeed, implying by the remark upon Morley's absence, a suspicion that her ladyship's indisposition was either caused or aggravated by the gallant baronet's absence.

"Did you like the sermon to-day?" said Flora.

"I thought it a good sermon," said I: "I did not very much approve of the delivery."

"Oh! dear no," said Flora, "it is quite dreadful when Mr. Piper officiates; we did not know that he would be there to-day, for it is not his Sunday, because we always go wherever Mr. Honeyman preaches—Lady Terrington is quite a votary of his; she absolutely swears by him, he is so very gentlemanly."

I said nothing in return to this strange compliment to the piety, orthodoxy, and eloquence of a clergyman; but waited to hear the beauty descant at full liberty upon the topic, when the prime minister of Caroline's empire made her appearance, and begged Miss Ormsby to step up stairs to her lady—I seized the opportunity of making a march towards the door, but Davis

stopped me, by telling me that her ladyship begged I would stay, as she had something to say to me before I went.

I, of course, anticipated the nature of the conversation which was to ensue, but finding it perfectly impossible to retreat, threw myself on a sofa to await my doom.

In a very few minutes Flora returned, equipped for a departure, and having begged me to join her in some luncheon, told me that Lady Terrington would be down directly, but that she had dispatched *her* to take the carriage to fetch Miss Somebody, whose name she seemed to suppose that I, and everybody else in the world perfectly knew; and then return for her and me, as her ladyship said she had some old family matters to talk over during her absence.

I did as I was bid, and felt quite enlightened when I saw the sylph-like Flora, who at dinner the day I was of the party ate hardly anything, (and declared that she never ate more) proceed to the bell, and summon a servant, whom she forthwith dispatched for luncheon, which I concluded to be what I already saw disposed upon a table in the back drawing-room; but I was deceived—sundry reinforcements arrived in a

few minutes, such as cutlets, patties, and other rifacciamenti; not to speak of jellies, and a most *particular* fondu; upon most of which Miss Ormsby, the fay, who, as I thought, ordinarily took her meals with the chamelion, (some others of whose qualities I was fully aware she possessed,) performed a most distinguished part; challenging me to drink wine with her, specially informing me that the doctors had recommended her always to take at least one glass of madeira at that time of the day.

We had scarcely finished this agreeable ceremony, when Caroline rejoined us—she looked still ill and worried, and, as I thought, had removed from her cheek the mimic glow, which she knew disgusted me—there was no smile playing on her lip, no allurements sparkling in her eye—I saw she had prescribed a task to herself likely to be painful enough to both of us, and had made up her mind to go through with it.

To Flora's inquiries, she said she felt better—she swallowed a mouthful of food, and, I suppose, had been included in the instructions given to Flora as to the use of wine; for she also took a glass of madeira, and pressed me to take

a second, with an ill acted air of gaiety, for I could see that her heart was throbbing with pain, and that her thoughts were far distant from surrounding objects; she seemed anxious to hurry Miss Ormsby's departure, who, for what reason I could not then pretend to guess, unless for the fulfilment of the proverbial obstinacy of certain persons, seemed proportionably inclined to protract her stay.

At length, however, she retired, and I discovered by one word she uttered in quitting the room what she had been lingering about for—certainly, not for a sight of her betrothed, (for anticipating, I suppose, her fate after marriage, she appeared to regulate her indifference for her lover upon Lady Terrington's scale of interest for her husband,) but, *as* certainly for an interview with the noble lord, who had so patriotically earned his grey poney by being liberal in parliament a few nights before. Of his lordship's success with his uncle in that affair, I had ocular proof three or four days after, when I saw the wise legislator actually going down to Westminster mounted on the very animal in question.

It was clear, by a little message she left with Caroline, that this noble lord had promised to

call, and that the flirting sylph had been hovering about for the last half hour, hoping and expecting that he would redeem his pledge; but he came not, and I had at length the satisfaction of seeing her step gracefully into the carriage. This art she had actually studied at a school in Cumberland Place, where they charged a guinea a lesson for teaching the accomplishment, and an hundred and fifty pounds a year for a coach to practise upon.

I hardly remember ever to have felt more perfectly awkward than I did when turning from the window, whence I saw the carriage drive from the door, I found myself *tête-à-tête* with Caroline on the very brink of a "scene;" entrapped after all my manœuvres into a confidence which must be perpetually harassing and inconvenient to *me*, and which I imagined would produce no possible good to *her*—I resolved to make one bold push for an escape.

"Suppose," said I, "we go and find Sir Mark, if he is alone."

Caroline did not answer—she remained quiet for a moment—she essayed to speak, but her heart was too full, and throwing herself on a

chair, she covered her eyes with her hands and burst into tears.

I ran towards her, and implored her to be calm, begged her to consider; which I did most earnestly for my own sake as well as hers; for although my friend Sir Mark was tied by the leg in his library, I did not know who might stalk in and catch me in a most innocent, but very suspicious situation with her ladyship.

"I *will* be calm," said she; "but neither you, nor any human being can tell what I endure —what pangs—what struggles I feel."

"The life of a woman, Caroline," said I, "is a life of trial—an existence of effort—custom has required at her hand sacrifices which are not exacted from the other sex, but when—"

"Stop," cried Caroline, "for heaven's sake spare me all—you see my wretchedness—I have betrayed myself—I thought it—I knew it—Heaven have mercy upon me—if it is at once so evident to *you*, all the world must see what I have laboured, even to madness, to conceal."

"For heaven's sake, Caroline," said I, "compose yourself, and do not in a moment of phrenzy like this, make a confidence which you

may hereafter repent—I ask nothing—I wish to know nothing of what is passing here; but since you directly charge me with having discovered something which you wished to conceal, I should very ill deserve the name of friend to you or Sir Mark, were I not, for the sake of your reputation and comfort, and his honour and respectability, to say, that innocent as in fact your conduct may be, the impression likely to be given by the way in which your family arrangements are made, must be eventually, I will not say actually *is*—certainly, one which you would not like the world to receive."

"I feel it all," said Caroline; "I am sure I am acting imprudently—I have sense enough to see it, to be quite convinced of it—and yet——"

"You have not the resolution at once to change your conduct," said I. "This does not surprise me, Caroline—you are not speaking to a stranger—you are not now unfolding a history new to *me*—you need not tell me that you married Terrington while your heart was another's—you need not tell me that, that other is *here*, guiding your destinies, the imperious arbiter of your fate—all this I know. What I would hear

from you, *now* that you see, as you tell me you do, the peril in which you are placed, and behold the dark and dreadful abyss on whose slippery edge you stand—is, that you have strength of mind to conquer feelings, which at your time of life should not be paramount, and recollecting that you have chosen a husband, to whom by the laws of God and man you have united yourself, drive from your presence the tempter who would ruin you."

"You are mistaken," said Caroline; "disguise is useless—we have fallen into the discussion of a subject which an hour ago I thought I could rather die than touch upon—William is no seducer—William is no insidious assailant of my honour—no—no—his heart is too kind—his disposition too generous, to entertain a thought, a wish, a hope injurious to *me*—he was my first, my only love, it is true—but he is my nearest living relation, his society is all I enjoy on earth, and——"

"Caroline," said I, "this is delusion—a wife should find her pleasure in her home, solace in the company of her husband, delight in the advancement of her child."

"And so do I," said Caroline with animation;

" my son is all to me, after my ill-fated marriage—he—my boy, first called forth the affections of my heart, he possessed them undivided, till——"

She paused.

"——— his pursuits and amusements took him from me, and his affections became engaged by a more interesting object."

" You mean Miss Ormsby," said I.

" Of course."

I shook my head.

" What," said I, " Caroline— for truth must be told—what should you say, were I to tell you, that in *my* mind, a marriage between Miss Ormsby and your son would be as unfruitful in happiness, as—any other where there was——"

" Why?" interrupted Caroline, who saw my unwillingness to instance her own union as an illustration of my doctrine: " she is amiable, lovely, and accomplished, full of heart and feeling——"

" ——— and principle?" said I.

" I suppose so," said Caroline; seeming, as I thought, not quite perfectly to comprehend the meaning of the word.

" Surely," said I, " there must be a want

either of principle or affection in a young woman who, affianced to one man, for whom she has confessed an affection, can listen to, and encourage the attention of others."

"That's mere manner," said Caroline.

"Manner!" said I: "then it is more shameful than I even thought it was—a woman who, for the sake of worldly admiration, and of having herself accredited as all-attractive, can ape the outward signs of sentiment and feeling, and look, and languish, and frown, and smile, merely to win, to awe, to soothe, or captivate the men by whom she is surrounded, is worse than the poor prostitute, who, driven by misery and want, yields up her person and her happiness to preserve existence; what name, what distinctive epithet is base enough for the cold, calculating, heartless fiend, who, by deluding a man into the belief of an affection which she has neither heart to feel, nor passion to appreciate; leads him on to discard his friends, abandon his connections, alter his habits, forego his principles, and new model his character for *her* sake, and at *her* suggestion; and who, when he has thus gradually and unconsciously changed his nature under her poisonous influence, can turn round and

play the same game with the next simpleton she is able to entrap?—and all this, for effect; to exhibit a power which after all is not worth having; and which entails upon her, all the sneers of scorn, and all the stings of scandal, which those who are ignorant of her heartlessness bestow upon what nature would conclude to be her criminal intrigues with her besotted followers."

"Flora is not one of those," said Caroline, "nor am *I*.—I have, and I own it, cherished one deep—one solitary passion in my heart, but it is harmless, and I am innocent—I own to you, that had I known the world *then*, as I know it now, no power on earth would have induced me to marry Sir Mark Terrington. I was then seventeen, my home was wretched; for although my poor father was kind and excellent, his wife ruled all, and her delight was to make me miserable. William and I were separated—I thought eternally—the hope of quitting the solitude of a house made dreadful to me was tempting—I saw the gaiety of the world, the independence of a wife present themselves—I caught at the glittering bait; but oh! what an hour was that, when having yielded myself for ever to my husband, I saw before me, like a

dreadful vision, the lover of my heart speeding to claim me as his own. Has any woman felt a pang like that?—mercy! mercy!—oh, that it had killed me *then*."

"Let me entreat you to be calm," said I: "your own good sense must point out the uselessness of these regrets—years have now passed since the event, and you have hitherto lived on——"

"Oh, speak not of it," interrupted Caroline, "name it not—a life of horror and of misery, so deep and poignant that I have no power to tell—love grows by constant association—so I dread to say does hate; and as unconsciously and imperceptibly as our affections towards a person with whom we live, without one word of love being spoken, warm into the most ardent and unalienable attachment, so do the feelings of dislike and repugnance into utter abhorrence: a thousand circumstances tend to make these feelings more acute with women than with men; and years have passed away, each more dreadful than the last."

"But," said I, "surely the constant comparison between the one you hate, and him whom you love, can end but in destruction—it

must, on the one hand, render your distaste more violent, while on the other, the perfection of the object of your admiration must be made more evident every hour. Your own statement thus shews that it is your duty to separate yourself from your cousin."

"Is it then a necessary duty," said Caroline, "to rob myself of all that makes life worth keeping?"

"Your son," said I?——

"——— is lost to me now," replied Caroline: "his intercourse with the world deprives me of his society—his manners, too, are altered towards me, and——"

"Do you perceive an alteration?" said I.

"I think I do," said Caroline: "his tenderness is changed into something like severity of observation, and——"

"And, Caroline," said I, "may it not be, that *he*, with others, disapproves of that peculiar intimacy, which so evidently subsists between Sir William and his mother?"

"He!" exclaimed Caroline, in an agony of terror, "my son, my child!—he—think me guilty—he—"

"I did not say he *did*, Caroline," replied I —"I asked whether it were not possible that he might see *that*, which to an observant young man, who mixes pretty much in the world, would give the appearance of criminality to others, who not knowing his mother's excellence so well as himself, might judge her conduct, when in private, by that which she thought fit to observe when in public."

"What *should* he see?" said Caroline.

"Caroline," said I, "you put questions to me which I cannot fairly answer, without offending your vanity, or wounding your feelings—but you have chosen to make me, most unexpectedly, a councillor—almost a confessor—therefore I will do my duty:—what *he* would see, *I have seen*, and I tell you that the impression conveyed to me by the expression of your eyes—the look, subdued by turns, by turns abstracted—the fixed gaze, the wandering glance, distributed, if I may use the word, promiscuously, amongst the men around you, first drew my notice to the subject you have now chosen to discuss with me, and first fixed me in the fear that you had already passed

that boundary, across whose line no woman ever can retrace her steps."

Caroline turned pale and red by turns: she would have spoken, but I stayed her.

"If then—for to this alone my apprehension tends—if *I* saw these—perhaps, and since you say so—I am sure, deceptive symptoms of a vicious passion—why should not your son perceive them too? Remember, he left you young and inexperienced in the world, unknowing in the ways of life—his idol upon earth—his mother—from whose assiduous kindness he experienced every care: he returns a man, and finds his parent more youthful in appearance than half the suitable associates of his wooing days. Is he blind to this? Is it because the venerated name of parent belongs to *you*, that his eyes can be shut against the personal attractions of the woman? I answer no!—Can he be deaf to the praises of your personal appearance, which assail his ears in every fashionable circle?—can he be insensible to the attentions which are paid you every hour in his presence, by every flirting dangler whom you choose to flatter into subserviency?"

"I cannot bear this," said Caroline, bursting

into tears—" indeed, indeed, I cannot—I have not deserved it—no human being has touched my heart, but one—and over that passion I will triumph."

" Thank God you have said it, Caroline," said I, catching her hand, and pressing it fervently —" be firm, be resolute—consider all that depends upon this resolution: do not imagine that I am unable to appreciate Sir William's high qualities, his wit, his grace, his valour, and above all, his early attachment to *you*—I fully estimate them, and it is because I know their value, I would guard you the more securely from their influence."

" I will—I will do all you wish," said Caroline.

" I *can* wish nothing but for your good," answered I—" nor have I any right to suggest a line of conduct; but *you* have done this—you have agitated the subject, and I have told you what I think—Sir William lives here altogether, does he not?"

" Yes," said Caroline, " when he is in town."

" That's wrong," said I: " it gives occasion for conversation."

" Conversation!" said Caroline.

"Aye," said I, "your names are mentioned together, not too reverently, in that Royal Exchange of fashion, the Opera pit, and *that* by fellows upon whom, five minutes after, you will bestow your sweetest looks."

"For God's sake!" said Caroline.

"Aye," said I, "for God's sake—for your own sake, for the sake of that excellent man your husband, for the sake of your child, chalk out the line and follow it—draw the limit, and say thus far have I gone, no farther *will* I go."

"Whatever you dictate I will do," said Caroline, her eyes streaming with tears: "I love my child better than myself—he is my comfort, my hope, my support—what else have I to love, that I dare love in this life?"

"This is not the language I wish to hear," said I, "the ———."

At this moment some servants entered the other drawing-room, to remove the luncheon—I was not quite sorry for the interruption.

"Mercy on us!" said Caroline; "these people—stay—some one, perhaps, will be coming—we will go to my boudoir—here," added she, speaking to one of the men—"ring for Davis—tell her I want her."

"That is another point," said I in an under tone, "upon which I would speak—that woman is the bitterest enemy you have."

"I cannot part with her," said Lady Terrington, "or, to tell you truth, I would."

"I suppose not," said I, shaking my head.

"We will retire to the boudoir," said Caroline, "for there we shall not be disturbed—no one dares invade *that* privacy, it is my *sanctum;* and by telling Davis what to say to Flora when she returns, even *she* will not presume to interrupt us."

Davis at this juncture entered—Lady Terrington spoke aside with her, and having finished her communication, said to me—

"Now let me shew you my boudoir."

Davis, whose ears were quite quick enough to hear these words, and quite ready to prevent any unpleasant consequences, said, unconscious of the inappropriateness of the observation—

"Sir William is there, my lady."

I thought Caroline would have sunk into the earth at my feet; her look was ghastly—the sentence of death upon a culprit at the bar could not have had a more powerful effect—the disclaimed William was enthroned in the sanc-

tum, where nobody dared intrude—he was there waiting until my lecture should end, to continue the ruinous system upon which they were acting.

"Then," stammered Caroline, "I—suppose—"

"I will wish you a good morning," said I—

"No—no—no!" said Caroline, convulsively grasping my hand—"stay here—I will not go to the boudoir."

"Go where you please," said I; "put no constraint upon your conduct in consequence of what I have said: I have only spoken of results as others are concerned; feel respect for yourself, for your character and standing in this world, for your peace and happiness hereafter, and go where you choose—besides, I ought, in common civility, to apologize for having kept you so long: indeed, nothing but the recollection that *you* touched upon the subject of our conversation yourself, could reconcile me to such a barbarous visitation. Good morning."

Davis was still hovering about.

Caroline overcame her feelings.

"When will you come and dine?" said she in a faltering tone.

"Whenever you do me the honour to invite me, and I am disengaged," answered I.

"You are not going to see Sir Mark *now*," said Lady Terrington, with an agitated manner, implying to *me* that she would rather I should not; I answered in the negative: I shook hands with her cordially, she wished me good bye with all the kindness imaginable, and we parted.

I left the house, and walked home.

CHAPTER XV.

He who trusts a secret to his servant,
Makes his own man his master.

DRYDEN.

It was now the close of the season; parliament was up; the Opera drawling on the last week of its hot and dusty life; the hackney coachmen had declined peas; the Almack's girls looked like ghosts; town began rapidly to thin, and eight or ten days succeeded that on which I parted from Caroline, without my hearing from *her* or any part of her family.

I was passing the end of Regent-street, near Waterloo-place, when I perceived my animated *friend*, Sir William Morley, walking his horse leisurely down towards Pall Mall, close to the

trottoir—he was within two yards of me, and I was actually proceeding to address him, when I perceived that he had utterly forgotten me—he looked for a moment full in my face, and then seeming to be suddenly smitten with the beauty of the upper part of the United Service Club, at the corner of Charles-street, fixed his eyes upon the bas-reliefs which figure on its walls, until we had passed each other.

Every man has a decided right to cut another whenever he pleases; but he who is once cut, is a contemptible dolt if he ever allow such a man to cut and "come again." That Sir William Morley did not choose to recognize *me*, abstractedly had only the effect of deciding, that upon any future occasion of our meeting, I certainly should not know *him;* but as a special proof that every word of my lecture to Caroline on the impropriety of her conduct with regard to *him*, had been repeated by *her* to the man himself, the circumstance was to me painfully annoying: I saw that his influence was paramount, and that not only he had decided upon letting me see that he had been made acquainted with my proceedings in the affair, but that he had influenced *her* to cease cor-

responding with me, or even inviting me to her house; for in all such arrangements my poor friend Sir Mark was a perfectly neutral power, and did not know, or, for all I knew, inquire, why any particular persons were or were not bidden to his feasts—nor whether the friends who on Monday graced his board, were or were not dead on the following Tuesday, so completely was he in the hands of the *regency*.

It was the practical proof, therefore, of the futility and uselessness of my most invidious efforts to be of service to Caroline, conveyed in her paramour's manner upon this occasion, which gave me the greatest sorrow and uneasiness; nor were those feelings allayed, when I found, a few days afterwards, that the family, having taken advantage of Sir Mark's convalescence, had actually quitted the metropolis for Stamfordleigh, without having honoured me with the slightest notice.

I was about following their example, and betaking myself to Cheltenham, where the peculiarity of making parties to take physic, and being extremely unwell to the sound of horns and clarionets, always has in it a charm for me, which I believe is even more conducive to

health, than the bitter potions which are dealt out in the pump-room, when I received a note from (of all the birds in the air) William Terrington, written evidently in haste, apparently in trepidation, begging to know at what hour he could have a few minutes conversation with me, on a matter deeply interesting to him.

When I saw a note, and such a note from *him*, I instantly apprehended that something unforeseen and very important had happened, for which perhaps I might have been better prepared than those, who from sitting too near a "family picture," could not so well judge of its effects as I did, who viewed it at a distance; at all events I resolved to receive my young friend, and accordingly appointed four o'clock on the same day for an interview.

The time came—William Terrington was punctual—as he entered the room I saw that he was labouring under some painful feeling, and when I shook hands with him, his hand was as cold as ice—he did not speak, but waited with evident anxiety for the servant's departure, before he ventured to address me: I begged him to sit down, in a tone which I meant to convey more than the common invitation generally

gives in the same words—I meant him to feel that I saw his agitation.

He seated himself at the table, and essayed to speak, but the storm of contending passion, which I saw lowering, burst, and hiding his face in his hands, he burst into an agony of tears.

The cause of his agitation instantly flashed into my mind, but to what extent his grief was justified, I yet knew not—I begged him to tranquillize himself, and tell me what had occurred, and in what way I could serve him.

"By heavens! Sir," said he, actually convulsed with agony; "no man can serve me—no man can save me—and why I have troubled *you*, I can hardly understand—you have been a friend of my family—and if you are not now so intimate with them, it is part of their fault that you are not——"

"I am not conscious," said I, "that any difference exists between me and any part of your family."

"No difference," said William, "but you have been neglected and not invited—and—that very circumstance increases all my grief and wretchedness."

I assured him that *I* did not feel the sup-

posed neglect with anger or vexation, and that, if that were all, he might rely upon it, that in any communication he had to make, my conduct would not in the slightest degree be affected by behaviour, which even, if perceptible, was disregarded by me.

"You mistake me," said Terrington: "I am not so silly as to think you care for the paltry rudeness of being scratched from my mother's visiting book. I have already seen enough of you to know that such ridiculous littlenesses would only excite your contempt; *my* sorrow and anguish arise from the circumstance I confess, because it appears to corroborate the hellish stories which are rife about the town of Sir William Morley's influence over my mother."

Again the agony of his feelings overpowered him.

"Consider, Sir," said he, raising his flushed countenance from his hands, in which he had buried it; "consider the situation in which I am placed—trained up the idol of a mother whom I fancied perfection, who at this moment, I am sure, is innocent of all crime, except indiscretion of manner—adoring her, worshipping her, and being worshipped by her—I return to

England, a man—knowing in the world's ways, and in the business of calumniators, the envy of women, the malice of mankind; and I see this parent, lovely in person, charming in manner, and fascinating in conversation, absorbed, actually absorbed by the influence of a man, who in former days had been her accepted lover; this I see plainly—I see, too, that her love of admiration, her love of power over men, and the conduct she adopts to gratify this passion, *must* lay her open to the basest imputation; but oh! Sir," added he, the tears again streaming down his manly cheeks, "she is innocent—she is innocent—I know it—I know it—and with this conviction I am come to ask your advice."

"You may command it," said I; "for your judgment on your mother's conduct is not more obvious than your affection for her. What would you have *me* do?"

"Tell me how to act on an emergency which presents itself," said William. "There *are* men, who, I know have dared to calumniate my mother's honour—not one instant would elapse before I was face to face with them in the field, were there a legion of them, but that I feel such

a proceeding, which naturally would acquire publicity, would most effectually produce an exposure, the least to be desired; it would proclaim authoritatively that such reports do exist—it would bring shame and despair upon my unoffending parent, perhaps destroy her existence, and certainly her happiness."

"You view the subject as you ought," said I: "the persons of whom you speak would naturally justify their conduct, if not to *you*, at least to the world, by shewing that these reports originated not in them; that they were, alas! too general—and, as you say, the suspicion, or I should rather say the calumny, would obtain even wider circulation than it has at present. The offensive observations, I presume, were used merely in general conservation, and it seems to me that you are not under any circumstances called upon to notice them in this stage of the proceeding—for, William Terrington," added I, "some more decided step must be taken with your mother herself, to save her from the ruin which actually awaits her."

"You mean from calumny and misrepresentation," said the ardent son.

"Of course," said I, "you are conscious of the bad appearance of her intimacy with Sir William."

"Yes, yes," said her son, "and it is all so silly, so childish, so cruel: if people knew that they were so nearly related, the case surely would be different—*I* see all the folly of it—his having been the favoured lover of her youth—a fact I only knew accidentally a short time since, through my poor father, whose good nature is beyond comparison or praise."

"It is impossible that you," said I, "should——"

"I, Sir!" exclaimed William, "I touch upon such a subject to my mother—tell her she was suspected of crime and guilt! No—no—sooner must one common ruin involve us all. I could not let her feel herself so much degraded in the eyes of her son, to whom she has devoted years of her existence."

"To Sir William, then," said I, "whose regard for her, if genuine, will induce him to withdraw himself from so constant an association with her."

"I had thought of *that*," said William, "but I apprehend that should such a circumstance

take place, some difference between us might ensue, conducive to results similar to those we have decided to be injudicious and undesirable; besides," added he, "it is merely the manner of my mother—I know her goodness—her excellence; but my heart aches when I see her in society, acting a part, and thinking *that* desirable, which, after all, is not worth possessing. You have heard similar reports then?" added he, recurring to the publicity of the remarks upon the family menage.

"I have, William," said I, "and have made similar observations myself."

"You have spoken to my mother on the subject," said William, "have you not——"

"Rather," said I, "she spoke to me, and as you may imagine vindicated herself from all imputation; but, as I believe, repeated immediately afterwards to Sir William Morley all that had passed between us, and even the advice which I had presumed to give."

"I am *sure* she did," said William, "and since that period you have been excluded from our house, upon one idle pretext or other made to my poor father, who has several times expressed his anxiety to see you—and thence it

is, I gather fresh materials for regret and mortification; for it is evident to me, that harmless as it may be in its nature, the influence of Sir William Morley is the real cause of your banishment from our family circle. Never was son placed in so delicate a situation."

"Have you never," said I, "in conversation with Miss Ormsby heard *her* make any remark, or say anything on the subject?"

"Flora!" said William; "Flora swears by my mother, thinks her perfection, and sees no kind of impropriety in her evident attachment to her cousin; *that* I am sure of; and I never have hinted a doubt of its correctness to *her*, because poor Flora is ill able to judge of worldly questions of that nature, and because I knew whatever I said to *her* on the subject, she would instantly repeat to my mother, from whom she has no concealments."

"If," said I, after a pause, "you would wish me again to interfere, and write to Lady Terrington, I have no desire to flinch from using a prerogative with which long acquaintance has invested me; but——"

"No, my dear Sir," interrupted William, whose anxiety to save his mother from un-

easiness was as evident as his belief of her innocence; "the point on which I came to consult *you*, was the line of conduct I ought to pursue towards those to whom the disrespectful words might possibly be traced—we agree upon *that* point, and for the other, I must wait and try if an opportunity of expressing my feelings presents itself; for to say the truth, I have been so deeply, so heartily mortified at what I have seen, that I have absented myself more from home, than seems quite consistent with the near approach of my marriage with Miss Ormsby."

"When is that ceremony to take place?" said I.

"Almost immediately," replied William; "my mother and Sir William Morley have persuaded my father to consent to our union much sooner than he proposed, and to *me*, harassed and distressed as I am, his agreement with their wish is doubly agreeable. After our marriage, Flora and I mean to travel on the Continent for a year or two, and then we return to fix."

"Is your plan of travelling a suggestion of your own?" said I.

"Partly," replied William, "but partly of Flora's: she is very anxious to return to Italy,

where she has left a particular friend; and partly, indeed, of Sir William's, who seems to think her health would be benefited by milder air."

I said nothing in answer, but it seemed to me that the hurried marriage and forced departure incidental to it, were stronger proofs of Morley's fatal influence over Caroline than any other which her unhappy son had even yet adduced—and convinced me that the hateful passion which predominated in her mind, had first estranged her affection from her darling son, whose doubts and dislike of what was passing before his eyes I was quite sure he could not entirely have concealed; and in conclusion, determined her, under the insidious counsel of her paramour, to get rid of witnesses who, deeply interested in her welfare, as they were, would not fail of being doubly troublesome in their observations.

Finding William somewhat too kindly, yet, perhaps, amiably resolved upon endeavouring to spare his mother any pain, and being by his own admission exiled from his family circle, I had nothing left to do, but assure him of my readiness to act in any way which he might think likely to be serviceable, pointing out to him tha in my professions or actions, as far as regarded

his mother, I was of all others the most disinterested person, since my age and infirmities placed me beyond the suspicion of any sinister motive.

For my own part, seeing what I *had* seen of Miss Ormsby, and believing in my own mind that she was as artificial and heartless a flirt as ever brought contempt upon her sex; I could not but deeply pity my poor young friend, who, in addition to the griefs and anxiety which he felt, as an affectionate and dutiful son, appeared to me to be on the eve of entangling himself in all the difficulties of a married life, in which, however warmly he might be attached to his wife, I doubted the singleness of *her* feelings; and in which, I apprehended that time would produce even more wretchedness to *him* than had even fallen to the lot of his father; since the hereditary quickness of the mother (which I believe in all cases descends to the son,) had given him a power of perception much stronger than our common mother, Nature, had bestowed upon his sire.

I parted from William Terrington with feelings of the deepest regret, satisfied only that in consulting me upon the best line of conduct to pur-

sue towards the host of whisperers-down of his mother's character, he had applied to one, who thinking in all cases where the reputation of a woman is concerned, discretion to be "the better of valour," advised him to stifle his natural feelings of resentment and indignation for *her* sake, for whom they had been so properly excited.

It was immediately after this interview that I fulfilled my intention of visiting Cheltenham, at which place, a few days subsequent to my arrival, I saw in the newspapers a paragraph, or rather advertisement, stating that "we—(meaning the parties themselves)—understand, the only son of Sir Mark Terrington, of Stamfordleigh, will, early in the ensuing month, lead to the hymeneal altar the beautiful Miss Ormsby;" and I laid down the paper with a feeling of sorrow, and something like incredulity: sorrow to think that William Terrington should be so near the consummation of his unhappiness; and incredulity, that such a ceremony should take place in the family of my earliest, oldest, and once most affectionate friend, and I be an exile from his hospitable roof.

I soon found that the announcement was as correct as it might be thought, considering

whence it emanated—the whole family party, including (of course) Sir William, were now settled at the Leigh, as it was called, and all measures contingent upon the happy union were speedily drawing to a conclusion.

Amongst other arrangements made for the convenience and comfort of the bride elect, Lady Terrington, it seems, had consented to bestow upon her the favourite minister of her cabinet, Davis; "she would be such an acquisition on the Continent, so accustomed to travelling, spoke French and Italian; and, indeed, in moving about was invaluable."

William, who knew that all this was perfectly true, and moreover, that his mother was extremely attached to this faithful servant, felt very deeply and gratefully the sacrifice which she so kindly intended to make—a gratitude in which Davis herself felt by no means inclined to sympathize—she had no desire to travel with the new married couple—she had played her game in early life, and wished now to have time and leisure to repent of her sins—for, strange as it may appear, it is not more strange than true, that her early peccadillos had risen up in judgment against her; and as the sweetest wines make

the sharpest vinegar, all the recollections of her youthful vanities had curdled upon her conscience, and she actually began to be shocked at what she saw going on between her mistress and Sir William, and had taken the liberty to remonstrate with Lady Terrington upon her neglect of Sir Mark, and evident attachment to her cousin.

Here then was the real cause of Lady Terrington's anxiety to be rid of her—Sir William Morley had been consulted; and he, for more reasons than one, suggested the only delicate mode of dispensing with her attendance. He had long wished her to be removed; first, because she knew more of *him* than he thought necessary; secondly, because she had recently taken upon herself to be scrupulously moral; and, thirdly, because, however incredible it may appear, Davis, who, while Morley was a constant inmate of Crosby, and the *sentimental* lover of her mistress, had been honoured with his most *particular attentions*, was even up to the present moment jealous of him.

This may sound as ridiculous in the narrative as the fact was in reality, but passion knows no distinctions, and the woman who has loved,

and yielded to her passion, never loses the feeling of interest and affection which had once entirely engrossed her; and thus it was, that Davis mingled in the confusion of a vulgar mind, over-illuminated, ill-regulated, and half-refined, an abhorrence of crime in others, excited, not as she fancied by piety and repentance, but because it brought to her memory scenes and hours on which the paramour of her mistress had been the partner of her own early indiscretions.

The first symptoms of the miraculous change wrought in the waiting woman, betrayed themselves in a desire on her part to be permitted to attend a methodist meeting, where a most eminent person in his way, fulminated his anathemas from the tub; and at which place she had formed an acquaintance with some pious persons, who worked upon her wild imagination and romantic character, until she took upon herself, as I have just observed, the gratuitous office of lecturer to her mistress.

At this point it seemed desirable to stop; and the favourable opportunity of bestowing such an invaluable servant upon her daughter-in-law presenting itself, Lady Terrington proposed the arrangement, convinced that whatever stiff

notions her hand-maiden might have picked up at the conventicle, they would be considerably softened by the climate and manners of Italy; a conviction founded, I presume, upon experience, since her ladyship had been an absentee herself for some years.

But a difficulty, unlooked for and unexpected, arose to baffle the perfect execution of the scheme — Davis declined the honour of the transfer—and declined it for several reasons—one, and that by no means the least important, was, that she, versed in all the cunningnesses of intriguantes, saw in a moment that the removal was intended neither for her advancement nor Miss Ormsby's convenience, but to get rid of *her*—like all confidential women servants, she felt her own importance, and determined not to go.

It was in vain that Sir William Morley, who trembled at her power, lest she should betray her former intimacy with him to her mistress, even at the expence of her own reputation; argued upon the agreeableness of foreign travel, the liberality of William Terrington, the amiability of Flora—Still, however, Davis was positive—she said she would willingly quit Lady

Terrington's service, but she would not be transferred like a slave to the next generation; and added somewhat pertly that her mistress ought to be ashamed of proposing such an arrangement.

After this burst of insolence and anger, Sir William deemed it prudent to withdraw his forces, and hold council whether it would be safe to advise the dismissal of the fiend, who now, infuriated at the indignity she thought was offered her, and irritated by the vice of those who surrounded her, seemed determined, so far from *going* anywhere, to remain, and rule, and reign, without controul, where she was.

Caroline, whose disposition was all kindness, and whose temper was imperturbable, felt convinced that a few soft words from her own lips would soothe the angry woman, and induce her to accommodate herself to her wishes—but she was mistaken.

The conversation which passed between them, not worth repeating, assumed the character of a dialogue between equals, in which the parties descended to personalities and recriminations; nor could Caroline check the disposition to insolence and reproach which her servant evinced; for

she herself had committed the suicidal act upon her own superiority, when she first condescended to make a confidante of her menial—to that hour might have been traced the progressive descent of Lady Terrington—to the influence which in those days guided and directed her, were attributable all the wretchedness she now suffered, all the indignities she now underwent.

"Besides," said Davis, "my conscience will not allow me to join William," (so she called him,) "and Miss Flora, when they are married—because I know—and I have told you fifty times, that match will be as unhappy as your own. Miss Ormsby does not care one pin for your son, but she is forced to marry him—and is mean enough to submit to the will of others, and unite herself to one she dislikes."

Caroline felt all the malignity of this infernal tirade—she herself was in truth conscious that Flora did not love her son, as she felt a girl should love the man to whom she is about to be married—she was equally conscious that Flora languished for a coronet, to which the thousand flattering tongues that eternally assailed her ear, whispered she had full pretension, and, indeed, in one instance might command; but to be told

by her servant that she was actually a party to an union of hands without hearts, when she herself had endured all the anguish resulting from such a marriage—to be told in the same breath that the son she idolized was *not* loved by the girl, who, in spite of appearances, declared to *her*, her affection for him, was too much—a flood of tears only relieved her.

"Davis," said she, "what can you mean by using such language to me?"

"To endeavour to save you from utter ruin," said Davis: "Miss Flora's maid at this moment has in her possession a letter from Lord Leatherhead to her mistress, to be delivered to her when she comes home—will *that* satisfy you? And do you think that *I*, at my time of life—for we are *both* come to an age for reflection—can consent to become the servant of your daughter-in-law, who, perhaps, will require me to carry on secret correspondence and clandestine communications for her?"

And she paused and gazed at her victim, to see if the blow she made at every point of her philippic told!

"Think of this," said Davis; "God knows, I have suffered enough in my mind for what

has passed in this family—when you were young, and your cousin William and you were so fond of each other, and I thought, of course, you would be married, I did all, ay, all I could to please, and oblige, and serve you, Caroline! and I saw no harm in it—but I am sure the hours of wretchedness I suffer now, when I see what is going on here, the shameful conduct—"

"Stop, I desire you,—I *order* you to stop," said Lady Terrington, her heart bursting with anguish, and assuming as much dignity as she was able; "do you recollect to whom you speak?"

"Oh, perfectly," said Davis, tossing up her head, "to Lady Terrington, who married the poor dear man now employed in justice-business at Cambridge; and who, moreover, would have run away with his excellent friend Sir William Morley, if that great personage, as he now is, had not been snapped up at her papa's door by bailiffs—I cannot forget these things—and now, because I venture to remonstrate with you upon your sinfulness—all for your own good; I am ordered off to Italy, to be out of the way."

"And by heavens!" said Sir William Morley, rushing into the room from the passage in which he had accidentally overheard the fury of the

fiend, and the convulsive sobs of her mistress, "out of the way, you shall go."

"Indeed, Sir!" said she, turning pale with rage and astonishment at his sudden appearance, "I shall?—you, being, I suppose, master of this house."

"Lady Terrington," said Morley; "let me lead you from this scene—you must not be subjected to such unequal conflicts."

Caroline was overwhelmed with tears, and hid her burning face in her hands—and never was a groupe more completely at what Sheridan calls a "dead lock," than this. Davis was afraid of proceeding with her abuse in the presence of Morley, who at once excited her anger, respect, hatred, jealousy, and admiration. Morley was afraid to rebuke *her* more sharply for her impudence, lest she should at all hazards shew up his former intrigues with her—Caroline was burning with shame that Morley should have witnessed her degradation, and was afraid to speak, lest Davis should repeat the dreadful history of Flora's infidelity, which she saw must create new and dreadful divisions in the family, and which, at the moment, she was not prepared to encounter; and thus the party stood.

And here, gentle reader, may be seen inso-

lence and vulgarity in the ascendant—a gallant, highly distinguished, splendidly decorated British soldier, mute, trembling and abashed, obliged to conceal his just indignation at the grossest insults offered to the woman he loves. Here may be seen the trembling wife of an English baronet, cast down with grief and shame and mortification at the just rebukes of her own servant, unable to command, because she fears to be disobeyed.

If this seem strained, *it is not so*—And whence have arisen all these strange anomalies, these hideous contradictions?—from laxity of principle, from the blind indulgence of unworthy passion, from the gratification of empty vanities, from the violation of domestic duties, from the neglect of RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION and SUPPORT.

To these combining causes also may be attributed, as they acted upon *her*, the sudden reformation of the waiting woman. From infidelity to fanaticism is the shortest step for a distance apparently so wide that man can take. It is the sudden change from wanton carelessness to over-acted virtue, in which by subjecting himself to privations and penalties, which the mild and cheering duties of our church by no means re-

quire or impose, he thinks to make up, as it were, for lost time, and obtain forgiveness of his past sin, by an outward shew of piety, from that Power which no worldly cunning can deceive. Davis had taken this surprising step—she was told by the stentor of the tabernacle, that she was to be saved—the means were pointed out—and if she had merely stopped at repenting her past criminality, and reforming her future life, she would have suffered little from the preachings and counsellings of the vehement ranter, to whose guidance she had committed herself—but all violent revolutions are dangerous—their consequences appalling.

After the pause of a few moments, Morley looked at Davis, with an expression ill-suited, indeed, to their relative ranks and stations, and not quite consistent with the violence of his first exclamation against her—it seemed to convey a gentle reproach for her conduct to her mistress—it seemed to convey an appeal to past days for himself—it seemed, in short, as if a truce were desired, preparatory to a definitive treaty of peace.

"Come," said Sir William, "come, Lady Terrington, let me offer you my arm."

Caroline looked round her, she rose and wiped the tears from her eyes; Davis looked at the agitated pair, and with an expression of countenance I cannot attempt to define, opened the door, and stood by it, while Morley and Caroline quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER XVI.

Now human kind in sleep their eares forsake,
Ev'n guilt itself some little rest does take,
And none but the revengeful are awake
CHAS. DAVENANT.

It must appear pretty evident to the reader, that matters could not long remain in such a situation as that, in which he left them at the end of the last chapter—the complete contempt of all discipline which characterized the conduct of Davis, her insolence, her affected indignation, and the coarseness of her remarks, determined Caroline, at all events, and at all hazards, to dismiss her from attendance upon her; for although in debate with Sir William on the subject, they both agreed that such a step, if taken with an appearance of

anger, was full of danger and difficulty, they both agreed also, that it was utterly impossible for the intemperate menial to remain in the situation which she at present held.

How to get quietly rid of the fiend was, therefore, the great and principal point for consideration, and how to account to Sir Mark for her removal from office, was another, not by any means to be overlooked. These measures, however, would necessarily occupy some time in their completion, and it was agreed, that Lady Terrington should, for the present, affect to pardon the violence and insubordination of her woman, and in that manner gradually loosen the ties which unfortunately connected them, until at last, upon a pretence of meeting her wishes, and suiting her inclinations, she was to be provided for, by being placed at a stipend to be furnished by her mistress, in the pious family whose praises she was constantly sounding.

Thus it was imagined by Sir William and Caroline, that the difficulty and the waiting-woman might both be soothed away; and her ladyship, acting under the advice and tuition of her affectionate relation, was thus to condescend

to play the hypocrite, and manœuvre with the servant, who had abused her in the most unreserved manner, and in the most unqualified language.

This, however, was part of the system, only one of the consequences attendant upon the unfortunate laxity of principle, which characterized the whole of Caroline's career; and no doubt, with the support and corroboration of Morley, the plan would have succeeded; Davis being made to believe in her lady's forgiveness, and induced to resign upon honourable terms, a situation, which her conscience whispered her she ought no longer to retain. But, alas! Davis was more on the alert with the *cabinet*, than they with *her*, and while they were debating the policy of temperance and moderation, and glorying in the anticipation of beating her, at her own game, she was on her knees; not in prayer, but at the door of the boudoir, with her ear applied to the key-hole; in which posture of humility, she became fully possessed of all their designs upon her religion and credulity; and before she quitted the position, which she had taken up for the purpose of overhearing their projects, and judging fairly (as she thought it,) of the effect

she had produced upon the baffled sinners; she had resolved upon a line of conduct, which her perverted imagination and demoniacal piety instantly suggested to her as the right one.

It so happened, that these discussions and conversations were, upon this special occasion, carried on with the most convenient security, inasmuch as William Terrington and Flora Ormsby were out, riding; and Sir Mark himself gone to the Quarter Sessions at Cambridge, of which, whenever he was well enough, he was a constant attendant—he was not expected back till the following day, so that the parties interested hoped that all appearance of the storm which had occurred, would have subsided before his return; but the unfortunate plotters against the security of Davis reckoned without their host—for she had determined to obtain her revenge in a more summary and decided manner.

The day wore on—Flora and her betrothed returned from their ride—*he* seemed dispirited, *she* appeared tired — but her animation returned as she reached the house, and she flew to her room, where *her* maid was waiting, as Davis had truly told, with a letter from poor William's rival, whose affection for Flora's im-

mense fortune made him doubly assiduous at what appeared the crisis of his fate.

It may seem unnaturally base in Lady Terrington, to have been a party to this under plot against her son, but it is most certain, that although not privy to the secret correspondence which was now carrying on, she did not entirely discourage the attentions which the young nobleman was constantly paying to her future daughter-in-law ; the conversations which passed, day after day, between Flora and Caroline, were made up of the theory of love, and discussions of the qualities, claims and pretensions of different sorts of lovers—the ardour of some, the reserve of others, the coldness of this, the animation of that—in short, their minds were filled with nothing but affairs, assignations, conquests, and flirtations; so that Flora at eighteen, was precisely what Caroline was at forty-one; and it is almost fair to suspect, that in this confidential intercourse, the natural enthusiasm and candour of Caroline had betrayed, even to her *protegée*, her overpowering affection for William Morley ; for certain it is, that in society the two ladies were much in the habit of exchanging significant looks, in the meaning of

which they appeared perfectly well versed, and which were played off alternately by one upon the other, as circumstances developed themselves, which related to the conduct or proceedings of *any of their beaux;* and thus committed to each other, stood two females, whose relative situations demanded the performance of duties, and the observance of conduct in every way at variance with those by which they were pleased to regulate their career in the world of fashion.

It was quite evident that Flora's behaviour was by no means satisfactory to William Terrington—nor was he blind to the interchange of looks which I have just noticed, and which was so frequently going on between her and his mother; and since, from the newspaper paragraphs, and remarks in general society, he had discovered that the world openly calumniated the innocence of the latter, that ocular communicativeness became even more painful; for by dint of observation, he found it chiefly practised when any popular *faux pas* was accidentally referred to, when observations were made on flirtations, or whenever a moral reflection was elicited from his father, or Sir Wil-

liam, who never failed to take the correct side of every argument broached at Stamfordleigh; and above all, William Terrington had heard that day from London, that a caricature, of the most offensive nature, had appeared in the shop windows; in which precious production, although from the ignorance of the groundlings, the persons of his mother and his intended wife were not correctly delineated; the public characteristics of Sir William, his features, and the decorations which he had received, were so plainly depicted, and the title of the production so obviously pointed to his family, that his uneasiness had become visible to Flora during their ride, who accordingly set him down as cross, stupid, and ill-tempered; and to questions which he put, with a view of ascertaining, without seeming to make any effort, whether in the flirtations he himself had witnessed, she was actuated by any feeling stronger than that, which he even admitted his mother to possess—a love of admiration—she gave answers which either evinced, as he thought, a desire to equivocate, or an indifference ill-suited to the subject, considering how very peculiarly they were both situated.

The dinner was a *partie quarré*, and during

its progress, the innumerable glances and cross-fire of eyes which were gleaming round him, kept poor William in a fever of agitation—the quarrel between Davis and her mistress—the interference of Morley—their resolutions as to the line of future conduct which was to be observed, kept them perpetually in communication whenever any points were touched upon which referred to the occurrence of the morning—the accidental mention of Lord Leatherhead's name instantly brought the eyes of Caroline and Flora in contact (Flora little suspecting her future mother-in-law to be so deeply in her secrets with respect to that interesting and noble Ourang-outang.) But more than all this——There occurred something in the course of dinner, which induced William, for the first moment in his life, to feel staggered in his faith upon the vital question of his mother's innocence, where it never yet had wavered. A reference to his father's absence from home until the next day, was followed by a simultaneous exchange of looks between Morley and his mother, so unequivocal, so damning, that his heart sank within him—he sickened as he raised the wine to his trembling lips—his eyes swam with dizzi-

ness, and it was with difficulty he could compose himself sufficiently to keep his seat: all that had been rumoured—all that the world had talked about—all that he had repelled with scorn and rejected with incredulity, seemed at once brought before him in hideous reality; and the first impulse on his mind was, instantly to take some decided step; what, he knew not; yet it appeared impossible to remain still or inactive, although sudden measures were neither necessary nor feasible—his agitation was perfectly evident to the parties most deeply interested, and a *second look* proclaimed the consciousness that their *first* had been observed.

The conversation flagged—a gloom seemed suddenly spread over the little circle, and William resolved, let what might be the consequences, to take advantage of the *tête à tête* to which the party would be reduced when the ladies went, to speak candidly to Morley; to address him as a man of the world, not yet guilty of any criminality, but endangering the reputation of his mother, by giving plausibility to the calumnies in circulation, by his constant residence at Stamfordleigh.

He resolved to put it to him with all neces-

sary firmness, and yet with the greatest possible delicacy, whether as a man of honour and feeling, he would not sacrifice his inclinations for the sake of one to whom his relationship naturally attached him, and give the lie to the shameful falsehoods which were bandied about the town, even in the common print-shop windows, by at least dividing the time and attention which he now so exclusively devoted to his cousin.

If, thought William, he reply upon this, I shall be more surely able to judge the nature of his feelings towards my mother and all of us. I am *now* fully justified in making the appeal, since even the talents of the pictorial libeller have been devoted to the subject; and so far from its being indelicate or disrespectful on *my* part towards a parent, to imagine the possibility of my mother's guilt, it would be base and unfair to Sir William, as well as to her, not to let him know what has actually appeared upon the subject before the public eye.

William had in a few moments arranged his plans, nay, even prepared in his mind the opening of his appeal to Morley—but he little knew his opponent—Sir William saw in an instant, by the

working of the young man's countenance, that something was powerfully agitating his feelings, and conscious that Lady Terrington's *one* look had been by far too ingenuous to escape her son's observation, had very little trouble in ascertaining to his own satisfaction what *that* something was. He judged by his appearance, by his abstraction, by the rapid contraction and elevation of his brow, the hasty manner, the suppressed sigh, the almost starting tear, the current of his thoughts, and the tenor of his intentions; he, therefore, decided upon *his* course, anxious beyond measure to avoid a conversation which could only bring on a *denouement*, which, let it turn out how it might, it was most desirable for him to avert till the latest possible moment.

What his plans might have been to detain the ladies, or by what graceful movement he intended to remain of their party, should they speedily retire, I know not; nor indeed does it much signify, for just as they were breaking up, a carriage drove to the door, which Flora Ormsby in a most admirably acted scene of surprise, discovered to be that of my Lord Leatherhead, whose entrance into the dinner parlour shortly

afterwards, satisfied Lady Terrington of the correctness of the young lady's sight as the carriage passed the windows; of which, she affected to appear sceptical, in order to exonerate herself with her son from any suspicion of having brought his lordship to Stamfordleigh, and to convince her future daughter-in-law that she was not aware of her having received a letter from his lordship a few short hours before, which her ladyship now felt perfectly assured, contained neither more nor less than a request to be permitted to drop in by *accident* in his way to Cambridge.

Whatever might have been the depth of this complicated manœuvre, certain it is that his lordship's appearance was little more disagreeable to William than it was pleasant to Morley. Lord Leatherhead, however anxious he might be to quit the men, and join the ladies when they retired, could not do so without being *too particular*—against which the single-minded Flora had specially cautioned him, making his *apparent* indifference a condition in the *leave* granted for his well prepared accidental visit.

Morley, however, who had the most sovereign contempt for his lordship's intellect, and a thorough distaste for his platitudes and insipidity,

very shortly relieved his lordship from this little embarrassment for having secured him as a stopper to William's appeal, which he had so judiciously anticipated: he did not care to prolong a sitting, of which the three members, all actuated by powerful feelings, were as strongly opposed to each other as light to darkness, or vice to virtue.

When the men quitted the dining-room, which they did in a very few minutes after the ladies, they found a carriage waiting at the door in which, as it seems, the original party were to have taken a drive, dinner having been served early for that express purpose; but since the circle had been increased by the arrival of the noble lord, (whose carriage had been put up,) it appeared that this design, not calculated to include *five*, was about to be abandoned, when William, whose heart was bursting with conflicting feelings and passions, extricated them from the difficulty into which they had fallen, by saying, he had letters to write, which must be written before the post left, and that seeing his place so well occupied, he would take the opportunity of getting over his business while they were absent.

Looks were now cast about just as intel-

ligible to William as those which he had observed at dinner—but which he was aware referred to subjects even still more deeply interesting to him *personally*—it was a series of ocular conversations, as to whether they ought to go, and take Lord Leatherhead and leave William, or whether, if the one staid, the other ought to go. Flora's eyes speaking too plainly to be mistaken a desire that the party should go on to the exclusion of William; at least, too plainly to be mistaken by *him*. He, however, cut short their doubts and scruples, by quitting the drawing-room, and retiring to his study.

From the windows of this apartment, he saw the party drive away from the door in high spirits; Morley evidently entertaining his companions with some little history, of which William, in the bitterness of his feelings, and the height of his suspicions, could not but think himself the hero. He retired from the sight of those in whose fate he was so deeply interested, sick and wretched, driven by circumstances, almost by ocular evidence, to doubt the virtue of a parent, in whom he had through life thought every earthly perfection centered; compelled to

believe that the girl, to whom he was on the eve of marriage, cared less for *him* than the idle vanity in which she was then indulging herself; and forced by a sense of affection and delicacy to be silent upon all these points, each so deeply involving the other, lest, acting upon groundless fears and useless apprehensions, he might wound the mother he adored, and do a violence to the feelings of the relative she loved.

That he could no longer lead the life he now toiled to support, he was assured; and baffled in the last opportunity which presented itself of introducing the dreaded subject to Sir William, by means which, while they did not commit Terrington as to his opinion or doubts, but merely brought to Morley's view what the world *said*, he was beginning to ruminate in his mind the best mode of proceeding in so perilous a matter, when a slight tapping at the door of his study awakened his attention.

"Come in," said he.

The door opened, and presented to his view his mother's woman, Davis, who absolutely trembling with agitation, (how excited he could not conceive,) and pale as death, entered, and closing the door, cautiously advanced towards

him on tip-toe, casting her haggard eyes around the room, to assure herself that they were alone.

"Davis!" said William, startled at her appearance, "how wretchedly ill you look."

"Ill, boy," said she, in a voice hardly audible; "who would not be ill, when such ill doings flourish—did you see them go?"

"You mean my mother and Miss Ormsby?" said William.

"Yes, and the fool and the knave that haunt their steps," said Davis.

"The what!" said William: "of whom do you presume to speak?"

"Presume!" said Davis; "it is no presumption brings me here—it is the Lord has put me on this, and his will be done—I have nursed you, William Terrington—I have dandled you in my arms—I have fondled you—I have loved you—you must be saved from the snares of the insincere and ungodly—yes, William, *you* shall not be made a fool of, though others are—d'ye mark me—do you think, William Terrington, that that lord came here by chance to-day—or d'ye think your bonny bride invited him?"

"Are you mad, Davis," said William, "or would you make me so?"

"No, I would save you," said she: "you disbelieve me—you think I rave—talk without book—here, boy—here—out of her own writing desk have I fetched the evidence—here is the lord's letter, which her maid treasured up for her—here is the permission asked to come to-day, which the young jilt granted—here—here—read it—her maid, who thinks herself faithful, would not trust me with the truth. *She* has her lover too—him, I brought hither myself this afternoon to soothe, and flatter, and please her—while with these keys—these never failing keys, I have drawn from her mistress's hoard the proof of her unworthiness to be your wife."

"Good God!" said William, "how am I to act?"

"Take not that name in vain!" said Davis; "I have been latterly taught to speak it with faith and reverence; but you live in the midst of sin and vice, make haste—read that—it must be returned before the beauty comes back to her bower."

"What would you have me do with the letter?" said William; "I won't touch it."

"Whisht boy, whisht," said Davis; "what are your scruples?"

"Honour forbids it!" said William.

"Honour!—ha—ha—ha," said Davis; "are you serious? Honour in *this* house—the mark for fools and knaves to point and scoff at—honour!—God help the honour of your poor father—are you blind—are you deaf—will you read this letter?"

"No!" said William; "I will not—and I do declare to you, that were it not for my mother's affection for you, which I know would induce her to think me a causeless enemy to you, I would——"

"What!" said Davis; "do you threaten *me* with betraying—do you tempt me with pretences of your mother's love for me—your mother hates me, Sir—hates—because she fears me—and I hate her."

"You!" exclaimed William; "this is insanity,"—and he moved towards the bell in order to call for assistance.

"Hold, child, hold!" said Davis, seizing him with an iron grasp; "call none here—three words from my lips would send your mother from her home—from *you*, and from the world—provoke me, and they shall out."

"Woman!" said William, "or rather fiend

in woman's shape—thy calumnies are false—false as hell."

"You reject my counsel too," said Davis; "you will not be saved—but you *shall*—it is a good work I am about, and it must be done—you refuse to read this letter—you refuse to open your eyes to the dupery of that young jilt, bred in the school of artifice and vice."

"Davis," said William, "I'll hear no more of this—another word, and by heavens I will summon the servants to thrust you forth from my mother's roof."

"Your father's roof, young gentleman, if you please," said Davis; "and as for thrusting forth, we'll see, proud Sir, who shall be thrust out first. Oh, that this task should be put upon me! but it must be done. When does Sir Mark return?"

"To-morrow, I believe," said William; "but why?"

"Why? Ay! that's the thing," said Davis; "spare to speak and spare to speed—to-morrow is the day—once more, will you read this lord's letter?"

"Once more then, *No*," said William firmly; "and I do beg you will restore it to the

place whence you so basely took it—I need no interference in my affairs, much less that of a servant; and least of all, that of a servant who thinks so basely of her mistress's son, as to imagine him capable of grounding his conduct in life upon a stolen letter written in confidence."

"Ah!" said Davis, laughing; "that's honour, and very honourable too—and I am despised, and vilified—but such is the lot prescribed for me—suffering—suffering and reviling—no matter, Sir—I tell you again, that the lord, whom you hate in your heart, was bidden here to-day, by the charming creature whom you love—see, hasn't he taken your place at her side—are they not laughing at your ill humour, and enjoying your wretchedness, while your kind mother joins in the jests against you. Mercy! mercy! they are here," cried she: "returned—this fall of rain has driven them back—I must be gone—remember, William Terrington, I have tried to save you—I have been accounted mad—I have been threatened—I now threaten in my turn—vengeance is at hand—not mine on you, or yours—but the unerring vengeance of Heaven upon sin and wickedness."

Saying this, she abruptly quitted the room,

leaving William in a state of feeling perfectly indescribable. All that she had been ready to prove—all that she declared within her power, rushed into his mind, and enraged as he was at her violence—her insolent remarks on his mother—her meanness and baseness—he still felt a regret that he had not temporized with her; not doubting that she was actually mad, yet fearing most seriously, that her conduct, while under the influence of insanity might produce the most dreadful consequences.

That Flora had received the letter in question, and had answered the request of his rival, he could now entertain no doubt, and his first impulse was to lose no time in calling his lordship to account for his conduct: yet how had he obtained the knowledge of his correspondence with Flora—by means of a letter stolen in her absence, (and while *he* remained at home) from her writing-desk, by his mother's servant—no—he would appeal to Flora herself, and try whether she would deny the charge of corresponding with his lordship—yet even that proceeding was equally open to the same objection.

Of his mother, he dared not even think—as-

sailed on all sides as it was, his good opinion began at length to waver; and who can attempt to paint the agony of his mind, when he felt compelled to admit, if not the existence of guilt, at least the existence of most powerful and appalling evidence against her. To join the party again, that evening, was impossible—he, therefore, hastily quitted the house, and commenced a ramble through the park, in which he occupied himself until late in the evening, devoting the time thus gained to a deliberate consideration of the position in which he was placed, and the mode of proceeding which he should adopt.

He, at length, resolved that he would temporize with his own delicacy, write to his mother a detailed statement, not of the world's calumnies which were spreading about her, but of the extraordinary conduct of her own servant; explain to her the means by which he had been possessed of proof of Flora's disregard and insincerity—and, in short, bring before her eyes, all those topics, to which he now saw it absolutely necessary she should give her most serious consideration; but which, for worlds, he could

not summon resolution enough to start in conversation. He felt, urged and pressed as he was on all hands, that he could adopt in writing a tone of advice, and even something like reproof, which he was quite convinced he never could assume while speaking to her. Indeed, matters had gone to such extremities, that filial duty itself imperiously demanded the execution of his plan, and superseded even the softer, tenderer feelings of filial affection.

It will be seen, that what William chiefly feared (and this apprehension may give him, in the eyes of some, an appearance of backwardness in prosecuting more vigorous measures) was the exposure of his mother; and in case of her criminality, (of which, even *he* now almost began to be apprehensive,) her certain ruin consequent upon the *eclat* of any affair vindicatory of her honour and reputation—it was this fear which now induced him to resolve upon postponing his appeal to Sir William until he should have received some communication from his mother, on the subject of his intended address to her.

Accordingly he returned to his study late

in the evening, and evading an invitation to the drawing-room by some common-place excuse, (which the party there, naturally attributed to a little fit of jealousy, and joked upon it accordingly,) he sat himself to work to prepare his appeal to his mother—in this he occupied himself until nearly twelve, when he heard Lord Leatherhead's carriage bear away its noble owner from Stamfordleigh.

He continued employed upon his most delicate and difficult task until past midnight, when the sound of voices in the lobby announced that the family were retiring to rest; they seemed to pause opposite the door of his study—and a sort of whispering contention evidently took place between his mother and Flora, followed by the sound of footsteps hastily retreating—these were again followed by a rap at the door.

"Come in," said William.

It was his mother who entered—all beauty—all grace and gaiety—He trembled from head to foot as she approached the table at which he was writing, and on which lay several sheets of his letter to her.

"My dear William," said she, "Flora de-

clares she will not bid you good night, because you have been so cross, and shut yourself up, and would not come down to *ecarté*. Mercy on us!" cried she, "what sheets of writing—is it a sermon, or a lecture, or a history, or are you following the fashion and turning novelist?"

"Neither one nor the other," said William—his eyes full of tears.

"Well, my dear boy," said she, with one of her sweetest smiles, "I'll not interrupt you—God bless you, William."

She kissed him fondly and fervently—and with a countenance beaming with innocence, left the room with a light step, and passed through the lobby to her bed-chamber.

"The world is a liar!" exclaimed William, as she parted from him, "my mother is innocent—that woman *cannot* be guilty."

The kiss she had given him seemed printed on his very heart—and as he read the implied accusations, and all the worldly calumnies which he had collected in his letter to her, the tears fell from his eyes on the paper, and blotted the hideous charges he was preparing to make.

Floras heartlessness, however, was unim-

peachable,—of *that,* had he chosen, he might have seen the positive proof—he, therefore, devoted his time and toil to the points more immediately relative to *her* defection—for since the world was acted upon by reports prejudicial to his mother, he felt less compunction in sending what he was writing to her, now that he felt assured of the folly of his suspicions, the madness of Davis, and the baseness of the world.

William remained occupied, either in thinking over all the topics which engrossed his mind, or in committing his thoughts to paper, wholly unconscious of the flight of time, until the clock struck two, and the grey tint of morning was spread over the face of nature—still William was engaged in his task, nor was it near its conclusion, when a hasty footstep in the lobby caught his ear—again his door was assailed.

"Who's there?" said he—starting up—thinking at this untimely hour it might be some hostile visitor.

Again the door opened, and again Davis stood before him.

"Are you up, boy?" said she—looking more

horribly, and more wildly than before—" is your heart strong—are your nerves firm—have you faith ?"

" For mercy's sake, what do you mean ?" said William.

" Be quick, be quick," said Davis, " 'tis a hard thing to do—but it must be done—there's fire in the house—fire—child—fire."

" Fire !" exclaimed William, starting up. " Why stand we here then—where is it ?"

" Be cool—be calm," said Davis, " noise creates confusion—disturb none—look to Sir William's room."

Saying this, she led the way towards the door of Morley's apartment.

" There lies your road," said Davis, pointing, " I cannot enter—go you in—see ! 'tis there—'tis there."

William, over-awed by the extraordinary manner of the woman, and not much disliking the idea of obtaining an ally in Sir William against her fury, should she prove, as he suspected, really mad, and become violent, did as he was bid ; the door unfastened, yielded to his push, and he entered the apartment.

In a moment he returned to Davis, who was standing in the passage.

" He is not here !" said William, " he is not in his room."

" Ha ! ha ! ha !" said Davis, with a hideous grin of triumph; " Fool, did you think he *was ?*"

" Where is he then ?" said William.

" Stop," said she in a subdued voice, as if she had suddenly beheld a spectre, and catching him by the arm, she thrust him, with herself, into a deep recess, where the light of dawning day had not yet penetrated; " Hush—look there !"

They could, from this place, see the entrance to Lady Terrington's bed-room — William's eyes were fixed on the spot; as they stood together, they could feel each other tremble, *he* shook with horror, *she* with anxiety and expectation; the door of Caroline's room was opened slowly and cautiously—the cold sweat stood upon William's brow, and his knees knocked together—his fixed eyes were blasted with the sight of Morley quitting the apartment of his mother, enveloped in his morning gown—he stepped softly yet quickly through the lobby —he passed near them—he saw them not—and

as he came close to them, Davis grasped the arm and body of her victim, lest he should rush from his hiding place, and kill him on the spot—but the paramour was safe—for William had seen the horrid vision, and fallen senseless on a sofa which filled the recess.

CHAPTER XVII.

He is my bane—I cannot bear him,
One heaven and earth can never hold us both;
Still shall we hate, and with defiance deadly,
Keep rage alive, till one be lost for ever.'

ROWE.

WHEN William Terrington recovered from the fainting fit, which the horrid sight he had seen, had caused, he found himself lying on the sofa in his own study; his neckcloth had been loosened, and restoratives were standing on the table beside him; and these, and the state in which he found himself, glared upon him as terrible evidences of the reality of what he had witnessed, and dissipated too certainly the faint hope, which, at the first moment of his restoration to sense and sensation, gleamed across his mind, that the whole might have been but a terrible dream.

To describe the state of his feelings—the anguish of his heart—the deadly sickness which came over him, is far beyond my power: as he beheld the sun beaming brightly over the foliage, and heard the birds carolling their matin song, the sight, the sound, were blended in a thousand associations with the happy hours of innocence, in which he had adored, with unqualified adoration, the mother that had borne him; the sweet breath of heaven, as it blew into the open window, seemed tainted with the rankness of her crime—every object which surrounded him was in turn gazed upon, and each recalled some incident, some circumstance that drove his thoughts, with tenfold force back to the dreadful subject which overwhelmed him.

The portrait of his guilty parent hung on the wall before him—his eyes settled on the splendid triumph of the artist's skill, and tears of anguish filled them—*there* were the artless smile, the graceful figure, the endearing look—there the mother who had nourished, who had cherished, who had trained him up, who had fed him with her own substance, and suffered pain, and sorrow, and sickness for his sake, for his existence; there was the detected, guilty dishonourer of

his father's bed—she, whose kiss of kindness still glowed upon his cheek—she, who had blessed him, with a fond mother's blessing, but a few hours before—she, whose honour and virtue he would have died to vindicate—she, the lost, wretched being, who, yielding to the fatal passion which had influenced her life, had been exposed to her son as the betrayer of his father.

It was not likely, with the high spirit and ardent feelings of William Terrington, that he would long remain inactive at such a juncture. To see her again—ever again, he felt impossible: he had worshipped, venerated, adored her—and to behold her now, would blind the eyes which hitherto had gazed with the fondest affection upon her—nay, so strong was the dread of associating his mother's form, in his mind, with crime and vice, that he tore down the portrait upon which he had been gazing, and hid it from his aching sight.

How was he to act?—his anxiety for action, for some decisive step, increased with the hour: the likeness of his mother removed, all his passion seemed to turn to anger and revenge—to the exposition of that man's villany, who, knowing his influence—who, conscious of his

power, had used them to the ruin of the peace, the respectability, the comfort, of the being who had loved, and had confided in him.

To call Sir William to immediate account, to meet him on the instant, was the first impulse—but love for his mother struggling with all other feelings, led him to re-consider this step: a duel between Morley and himself, would at once produce the dreadful result at which, however just it was, he had so often trembled—he had seen the horrid sight which Davis exhibited to him—the secret of his mother's guilt rested between them—it might not be promulgated—the difficulty in which he found himself was maddening. His father *ought* to know of his dishonour—he ought to be revenged—but, *then*, who must be the too certain sufferer—HIS MOTHER!

The defection of Flora—the loss of *her*—were matters of slight importance, when compared to the one great object of his thoughts, his fears, and his consideration—nor could he at all decide how to proceed. The affair was past palliation; he could not speak to Morley—to his mother upon such a subject—how could it terminate?—Suppose him

silent—suppose him to bind Davis by some awful oath, to keep secret what she had seen—in what a state would he then live? Conscious of his mother's guilt—conscious of the dreadful and continued deception practised upon his father—*that* could not be. It was not as if temperance, or moderation, or silence, could *prevent* the catastrophe—the crisis was past—the crime had been committed.

He looked round him—every object was colourless—his lips were parched—his eyes were clouded in mist—his limbs trembled—the idea of remaining where he was—the thought of inactivity, and, above all, the dread of seeing either of the criminals, drove him into phrensy.—He resolved on quitting the house.—He re-arranged his dress, and prepared to depart from the home of his fathers—It was then, and at that moment, first, that he decided on the line of conduct he would pursue.

He sat down, and wrote this note to Sir William Morley:—

"Circumstances of the first importance to my happiness, have rendered it necessary that I should withdraw myself from Stamfordleigh--

an interview with you is essential—farther explanation I cannot give you; I shall expect you at Wallace's Inn, as soon as you can leave the house, without exciting suspicion—inquire for me, and you will find me there; the sooner you come, the better.—W. T."

This he folded and sealed, and proceeding to the door of his man's room, which opened into the lobby below his own, he roused him from his peaceful slumbers, and directed him to give the letter to Sir William's servant, so soon as he was stirring, with orders to deliver it to his master the moment he awoke; adding, that *he* was himself going early to fish, and should, perhaps, not return until after breakfast.

With this account the servant was perfectly satisfied, and when inquiries were made for his master, he repeated it, to those who asked, with equal success; except indeed in the case of Davis, who knew too well what must be passing in William's mind to credit the story, although she was one of the first to inquire after her victim.

Morley received the note, and immediately guessed that William was irritated by Flora's conduct of the preceding evening, and had

determined to call her noble swain to account, and that he required his aid and assistance; and nothing Morley more particularly piqued himself upon, than a perfect knowledge of the code of honour, and an aptitude at arrangement, whether by action, or adjustment, of all chivalrous matters; which peculiar tact had placed him in the situation of second in many affairs of a similar nature.

William having made his way out of the house, walked rapidly towards the place of his destination; although, the slower he went, the more unlikely his appearance at Wallace's Inn would be to excite attention or suspicion, that any hostile interview with Morley, or anybody else, was in agitation; but it seemed that activity, and activity alone, could relieve his mind from the stupendous load with which it was burthened; the recollection, however, that he had better not arrive too soon, induced him to halt altogether, and throwing himself on the grass, under the shade of some trees, he again communed with himself—again held council with his thoughts—re-considered all his difficulties—the horrid situation in which he found himself, and summing up all the particulars of

the dreadful case, rose from his meditations, fully confirmed that the measures he had proposed to himself, were the only ones, which, under the circumstances, he ought to adopt.

Time wore on, and he proceeded on his journey, and by seven o'clock, reached its termination; early as it was, he found the male inmates of the little alehouse, (for it was nothing better) all abroad, engaged in their several occupations, and no one but the widowed landlady within: her surprise at seeing the young squire so early a guest at her door was considerably moderated, if not entirely overcome, by perceiving that he was prepared for the sport which he had professed to seek; and when he told her, that he expected Sir William Morley to join him, she merely inquired, with equal regard to her own profits, and her visitor's comforts, whether she should get breakfast ready directly, or wait till Sir William arrived.

William desired the latter; and having ushered him into her best parlour, the careful dame proceeded to the well known hiding places, to get the freshest eggs, and to her dairy, to get the richest cream, and make all preparation for the meal, which was to be honoured under her

humble roof, by two such unexpected and illustrious visitors.

Sir William having inquired of William Terrington's man, if he knew whither his master was gone, and being told, as William had told the servant, the object of his early departure, the gallant baronet desired *his* servant to repeat to the ladies, if they should inquire after either of them at breakfast, that he had joined Mr. William in his diversion, and that they should be back before the heat of the day.

Having made this disposal of affairs, Morley proceeded towards the appointed place, and directed his steps across the park, at a pace somewhat accelerated by his anxiety to know the nature of William's summons, never suspecting the real cause in the least.

Walking on hastily thus, he was startled by a rustling close to him, and still more by a voice familiar to his ear, which suddenly assailed him—

"You are out early this morning, Sir William," said Davis, who stood before him.

"Is it you, Davis?" said the baronet.

"Yes, 'tis I, Sir William," said she: "where are you going, Sir?"

"To join William Terrington in his fishing excursion," replied Sir William.

"That tale may do with those," said Davis, "who slept soundly last night: with *me*, it goes for nothing: you are going to account for your past deeds, Sir William: you are at the close of your base and profligate career. It is *I* who have done it, and the Lord will reward me."

"What does the woman mean?" said Morley.

"The woman means," said Davis, "that the boy you are going to meet, saw you, last night, when little you thoug' eyes were on you."

"How?" said Morley, turning deadly pale.

"When you crept, like a crawling devil, from his mother's bed-chamber," said Davis.

"Great heaven!" said Morley, "how—what——"

"*I* took him, Sir, to see the sight," said Davis, grinning ghastlily. "I taught him the tale: I once sinned, and you were the partner of my crime, Morley: I forgive you all your baseness—the hypocrisy—the falsehoods you have acted and told on my account, for and against me—if you can forgive yourself; but I was called to do this—we saw you, Sir."

Morley was nigh sinking to the earth.

"Saw me!" said he, endeavouring to rally and deny.

"Yes, and one other saw you that you heeded not—HE;" and she pointed towards the bright sky—"did you think to cheat *Him?* did you think, because it was dark, and because you stole like a thief along the passages of your friend's house, that you cheated *Him;* or that, because no mortal eye was on you, *His* slumbered!—Fool—fool—fool."

"I shall go mad!" said Morley.

"Right—let it be so," said Davis: "rave—and rave—and rave, and *be* the wretch you have made your poor degraded, polluted Caroline—the devoted fool who loved you—whom you deserted for money, which you could not secure—and whom now, you have ruined."

"And do you mean to say," said Morley, his eyes flashing fire, "that *you* betrayed your mistress to her son?"

"I did, indeed," said Davis, with an expression so fiend-like, that Morley, feeling how completely she had unsexed herself by her villany, would, I believe, have felled her to the earth

before him, had not some labourers just appeared in sight.

"Some one is coming," said Davis; "go your way, Sir—keep your appointment—expiate with your blood the rank crimes you have committed—away, Sir—away, Sir—don't let these people suppose that so finished a gentleman as Sir William Morley has been making assignations with my lady's discarded waiting woman. But hear me—if William Terrington's passion lead him to excess, lift not your arm against that boy—add not to your sins that damning one of shedding human blood—and as you act by *him*, Morley, may Heaven reward *you!*—We shall see each other but little more—they are here—on with you—on——

Morley, in a state of stupefaction, did as she dictated, and proceeded instinctively, but almost unconsciously, on the road to Wallace's Inn.

His thoughts now took a new range—he was to be the principal in this *rencontre*—he had been detected—he was at the mercy of the inveterate woman he had just met—he was on the eve of standing before the son of his injured friend, and outraged love; and of accounting, certainly, in

this world, and, perhaps, in the next, for all his vices, even in the twinkling of an eye. With that nerve and firmness which he had so often shewn in days of trial, when the hot fight raged, and his lion-heart had beaten with enthusiasm, while the foes of his country fled before his manly charge, he coolly revolved in his mind, not the past events, not the atrocity of Davis, not the detection of Caroline, not his own criminality; those were for after-consideration—the point to start from *now*, was the *present*—he had been betrayed, discovered, and his vice was known to Terrington—it was, (that point being established, that fact having been proved,) how he should conduct himself in the sequel.

Unattended by a friend himself—and almost certain that William was also alone, it did not appear that the satisfaction which he was bound to give, could *then* be afforded—and he felt, now that he knew the real state of the case, that it would be infinitely wiser, and more prudent, to avoid a personal rencontre, with a boy whose whole soul must be in arms against him, and who, driven to desperation, might involve himself in crime and misery, by taking some dreadful

revenge upon the bitter foe to his honour and happiness. And in all this consideration, *self* had in fact little to do—Morley loved—ardently loved, the people whom he had ruined. The progress of a guilty passion is so sure and certain, and yet so gradual, that when once admitted, its march is hardly perceptible; day after day goes on, and, as each succeeds another, some barrier is broken down, some new freedom admitted, until, at length, the whole conduct of life is coloured by the one feeling, and (particularly in a case like Morley's,) the extremes of crime are palliated, and even justified, by passing circumstances and events, until the day at last comes when those who love each other better than themselves, bring upon both, and all around them, ruin, misery, and destruction.

Morley loved Caroline—had always loved her—and she had but too warmly returned that love—William Terrington knew this; but honourable, kind, and generous himself, he would have thought it an injustice not to be borne, if he had suspected either Morley of dishonourably suing, or his mother of yielding to his solicitations:—her manner even negatived it—for, as I

have said before, it was *generally* alluring; and, although it gave one the notion of vanity and coquetry, it checked, from its universality of agreeableness, all idea of a sole, engros-ing, absorbing passion, like that, which, in truth, she so fatally felt for her cousin William.

At times, the silent tear would steal down her cheek, and her eye would remain fixed, and sighs would heave her snowy bosom—but that was in the solitude of her chamber—to the world she presented nothing but smiles and gaiety—and until Morley's return to England, had acquired certainly the character of a flirt—and nothing more—a character, which in its heartlessness gives the most perfect security against any heavier imputation.

Morley, in the course of his walk, had decided, at all events, to act upon the advice of Davis in one point—no power on earth should induce him to lift his arm against William. If he rashly forced him into actual hostility upon this occasion, he would receive his fire, and although he would not have recourse to the *conclusive* measure of firing in the air, he would purposely avoid the mark which his antagonist must present.

By the time he had made up his mind as to this mode of proceeding, he had nearly reached the door of the inn; for in the debate with himself, he had over-ruled the prudential feelings which once dictated his declining the present meeting; because it seemed to him, knowing the real cause and origin of William's summons, that it might look like apprehension of the consequences if he did not, at all events, make his appearance; particularly, as for all he knew, William might actually have provided himself with a friend.

"Oh! you are come at last, Sir William," said the Widow, as Morley stepped up to the door; "Mr. Terrington has been waiting nearly two hours—now then, Sir William, I'll get the breakfast—pop in the eggs—and cut the toast—it will all be ready in five minutes, Sir William."

"Where *is* Mr. Terrington?" said Morley; not even deigning a reply to the poor dame's well meant civility.

"There he be, Sir," said she; "in the best parlour, at the end of the passage, Sir William. This way, Sir—this way——"

"I can find it, I dare say," said Morley; anxious that the landlady should not be a wit-

ness to the first meeting between William and himself.

"Mind the step, Sir William," said the widow; "mind the step, Sir——"

"Merciful God!" exclaimed Morley, starting back—"what is it!—woman, speak—speak this instant?"

The astonished landlady turned into the passage, and beheld Sir William, pale and breathless, leaning against the wainscot, and pointing to the closed door of the room in which he was told Terrington was waiting his arrival, and upon which his eyes glared hideously.

"What! Sir William?" said the landlady, catching the infection of fear, without knowing its cause.

"Do you see it, woman?" said he; his teeth chattering—"I ask you, do you see it?"

"God's mercy!" cried the widow; "I see it, indeed!"

A thick crimson stream crept from under the door, and like a serpent wound slowly and silently along the floor of the passage.

"William Terrington," cried Morley, hardly able to articulate, "open the door—open the

door this instant—He is killed—woman—woman, the boy is killed."

Unable to endure the dreadful suspense a moment longer, he burst into the room, and there before him, on the floor, lay stone dead—his head shattered to atoms by a pistol, which his cold hand grasped—the high spirited broken-hearted William Terrington—and as he paced towards the mangled corpse, the Adulterer's feet plashed in the blood of his victim's child.

It seemed as if the original intention of the unfortunate young man had been to avenge his mother's ruin, and the destruction of all his hopes of happiness, upon the destroyer; but that, left alone for more than two hours, the whole of his wretchedness glared upon him in all its horror;—He might revenge the wrongs his family had sustained, by taking the life of his nearest relation—still would he remain the son of an adultress, stained with the blood of her betrayer—his mother's reputation (dearer far to him than life,) was gone—his father's honour outraged; the demon, who had aided and abetted in all the proceedings which led to this terrible consummation, was in the secret of her mistress's culpa-

bility, which, with feelings and passions like *her's*, was not likely to remain a secret long —to what had he to turn then, that might alleviate his sorrows, or hold out a hope of future peace or comfort?—his affianced bride had clandestinely invited a rival to his father's house, apparently under the sanction, or, at least, with the connivance of his mother—nothing but misery offered itself through *that* channel; what glimmering ray beamed through the dreadful gloom in which he was involved?—None!—none!—none!—and in the conflict of all these feelings, that irrevocable deed was done, which alone was wanting to fill up the catalogue of crime and horror.

The sequel is soon told—Caroline is still in confinement, a maniac—Morley, unable to pay the law's award for crime, is an exile from his country, if a life of gaiety upon the continent may so be called—Flora Ormsby (still unmarried,) remains with poor Sir Mark, who has almost entirely secluded himself from society; and Davis, married to a dissenting minister, attends the tabernacle regularly, rails against the vices of the Establishment, and is esteemed a

most exemplary member of the community to which she belongs.

"See," said I to the Major, "what an accumulation of wretchedness has this fatal attachment brought upon an amiable family—to *me* it is painful in a tenfold degree, because I know the original excellence of Caroline's heart and disposition, and because I know the whole to have arisen from a want of mental controul and moral regulation—a want, in short, of religious support and confidence—and when once a woman commits herself, as *she* did, in the outset of life, all the rest will naturally follow."

"True," said the Major; (and he said it in French, because he rarely quotes in English)—"CE N'EST QUE LE PREMIER PAS QUI COUTE."

GERVASE SKINNER.

GERVASE SKINNER.

CHAPTER I.

"In every town we wait on Mr. May'r,
First get a license, then produce our ware:
We sound a trumpet, or we beat a drum,
Huzza! (the schoolboys roar,) the players are come,
And then, we cry to spur, the bumpkins on,
Gallants, by Tuesday next, we mu-t be gone."

SWIFT.

To him who venerates the talents and virtues of the greatest and honestest minister England ever knew, or sympathizes with the least culpable traitor that ever expiated crime by disappointment, defeat, and death; Somersetshire, sweet Somersetshire, cannot fail to be an interesting county.

To him who admires frank ingenuousness in men, and blooming beauty in women, varied scenery, and rich cultivation, green meadows and clear rivulets, neat farms and teeming orchards; Somersetshire, sweet Somersetshire, cannot fail to be an interesting county.

To him, who perchance has lived amongst its "hedge-rows green;" and, in the heyday of his youth, has revelled in its meads, and strolled, (not quite alone,) amongst its shady groves; who has partaken of the wonted hospitality of its kind-hearted inhabitants, and participated in all their harmless mirth and guileless gaieties; Somersetshire, sweet Somersetshire, must ever remain an interesting county.

In Somersetshire, then, that garden of the west —was domesticated in his highly respectable Elizabethan House, at Bagsden Parva, the hero of my present tale—Gervase Skinner, Esq.; one whose disposition was as unromantic as his name, who (having in his younger days disported himself as captain of the county militia) had, a few years before the commencement of this narrative, inherited from his excellent father a patrimony of fifty thousand pounds in money, a comfortable residence; rich land, fat beeves, old wines, old pictures, and old plate; stables well furnished with horses, and barns well stored with grain; to all which agreeable contingencies he succeeded when in his fortieth year.

The piping times of peace had, long before, blessed this happy land, and it was just as Mr.

Skinner began to feel the awkwardness of having no pursuit, that Providence decreed the demise of his worthy parent, and his consequent accession to all the rights, privileges, and immunities of a country squire, as head of his family; of which, by the bye, he could be accounted little else, since, in truth, he was the sole survivor of his ancient stock.

Upon this important change in his affairs, he bade adieu to the Tavistock Hotel in Covent Garden, in which he had hitherto smoked himself during the season in London; and proceeded to establish himself in his paternal home. There, he sat himself down; his wishes bounded by the hawthorn hedge which environed his well-trimmed lawn, his hopes scarcely ever rising above the tops of his apple-trees or the thatch of his corn-ricks, with the produce of which, he was to make merry in the year to come.

But with this almost primitive simplicity, and genuine artlessness of character, Skinner was an extremely pleasant companion. He had read much, seen much of the world, in *his* way; was quick and sharp in conversation himself, and sensibly alive to merit in others. He was of a convivial turn, good-natured to a failing; and where a woman was concerned, (as indeed

most men are,) a very child: his failing that way, however, did not fail to secure him much favour with the provincial fair ones: and although the hand of time had stamped him with some few marks of old bachelorism, there were not wanting eyes to sparkle, nor hearts to flutter, when the rich and kind Squire Skinner, of Bagsden Parva, made his appearance at a race-ball, or county meeting.

Every man, however, has his faults. There are spots in the sun—was it to be hoped that Gervase Skinner, of Bagsden Parva, in the county of Somerset, Esq. would be exempt from the general fallibility of human nature? It should seem not: and although I confess it is painful in the extreme to shew up my worthy friend, yet as a candid historian I am compelled to do so.

The ruling passion of my hero, then, was, to go through life with a character for extraordinary liberality—financial liberality I mean—which character it was his unremitting study to support, (as cobblers profess to mend shoes,)—on the most reasonable terms. His ambition was to be thought careless of money, even to extravagance; being in his heart the veriest miser extant. His whole mind, concentrated within the

focus of his own property, was devoted to saving in such a covert manner, that his economy should never peep out. He would pick up a pin slily, whenever he saw one; because his nurse had told him, when he was a child, "that a pin a day was a groat a year;" yet would he have died, if he had thought himself observed in doing it. He would, in London, walk a mile, through a pouring rain, to save a shilling's worth of coach-hire, although the wet spoiled him five pounds-worth of clothes; and if discovered would *say* he did it for the sake of exercise. In short, his weak point was the magpie sentiment of picking up, hiding, and hoarding; striving at the same time with all his might, to exhibit to the world the pert gaiety and hopping thoughtlessness of the mischievous bird, his very prototype in disposition and pursuits.

Amongst his other solicitudes, one ranked foremost, to which it is most necessary I should immediately refer. Mr. Gervase Skinner was actually under an engagement of marriage; a circumstance of which few of his acquaintances were aware, and which it really appeared at times that he himself forgot. To say truth, (whatever *he* might have said otherwise,) it was less love, than love of money that induced him still to

think seriously of fulfilling a compact entered into by his late respected father, with an old and wealthy friend in the north of England, several years before his death, and at a time when Emma Gray was in fact a child. If he had given his mind full play, and trusted to the feelings of his heart, rather than the cravings of his disposition, Gervase, I am certain, would have released the poor girl from the blind bargain which had been struck up between the old folks, without *her* consent or knowledge. But, alas! Emma Gray had fifteen thousand pounds; a sum to which the worthy suitor was so devotedly attached, that he could by no means prevail with himself to put an end to a treaty, the fulfilment of which would unite an innocent country girl of nineteen with a worldly bachelor of forty-five; *she*, being wholly unacquainted with his character and habits, and almost ignorant of his person; and *he*, being as ill calculated for a marrying man, as unmarried man could be.

Emma Gray was as pretty a rustic as ever breathed the air of heaven. There was a freshness about her complexion, a ruddiness on her lips, and a brightness in her eyes, so new, so brilliant, and so sparkling, that never was her pretty face seen where it was not long remem-

bered. Indeed, poor Mr. Gervase Skinner was not without rivals; and, considering the distance at which he lived from the bower of his fair, the rarity of his visits, and the scantiness of his correspondence, his jewel appeared to be rather in jeopardy. He, however, who looked upon the whole affair as a matter of business, waited with the most philosophical patience for the arrival of Emma's twentieth birth-day; before which period the marriage was not to take place, but at which time it was intended that it should be celebrated.

It ought, perhaps, here to be remarked, that Mr. Gervase Skinner, throughout his life acted, or said he acted, "upon principle." If it meant nothing in reality, it was a cant phrase, which served him as an excuse for doing the most extraordinary things in the world. Thus, at his own house, he never drank wine "upon principle;" whenever he dined any where else, except at an inn, he took his bottle cheerfully "upon principle." He always travelled outside the stage-coach "upon principle;" "upon principle" gave the coachman only one shilling as his fee; covered his hat with an oil-skin "upon principle;" never took refreshment on the road

"upon principle:" and thus it was that "upon principle" he denied himself the pleasure of seeing his acquaintances more frequently at Bagsden; although, "upon principle," he was always extremely happy to visit *them* upon all suitable or unsuitable occasions.

Having just given this sketchy outline of my hero's character and condition, it becomes my duty to detail a few events which occurred just about the period at which this little history opens.

I presume that my reader knows Taunton topographically; if he do, he will immediately recall to mind its roseate town hall, stretching across its market-place: its castle, its venerable church tower, (a little Bruges,) rearing its noble head at the end of Hammet-street; its meeting-houses, its "corner-shop," its weirs and meadows, and, *above all*, its theatre. Should he, however, be ignorant of the *locale*, it will be necessary for him to build a play-house in his mind; since it was under the roof of Taunton theatre that Mr. Gervase Skinner began, in his forty-fourth year, to feel a passion to which, for the previous forty-three years and eleven months, his tough heart had been a stranger

Unless the periodical works of the day speak

falsely, it was at Taunton that the inimitable Liston first "smelt the lamp." The fact that he made his first appearance there, renders its theatre classic ground; and the British public must ever look with pleasure to the stage which first gave to the profession one of the most powerful and original comedians it ever possessed; but it was reserved for the bewitching Mrs. Amelrosa Fuggleston to render it pointedly, particularly, and vitally interesting to my unsophisticated hero, Mr. Gervase Skinner.

It should here be premised, that Mr. Gervase Skinner was what is called a "theatrical man." He once enacted at school the part of Publius, in the Roman Father; and never failed "upon principle" to invite some of the company of travelling Thespians, who, at certain periods of the year, enliven the west of England with their agreeable antics, to partake of the *hospitalities* of Bagsden Parva; *he*, cunningly obtaining thereby free ingress to all parts of the theatre, and the character of a patron into the bargain; although, to ensure these pecuniary and popular advantages, he disbursed in fact ten times more of his worldly substance *in kind*, than would, if he had properly disposed of it, money-

wise, have secured him all the privileges he desired, and all the popularity he courted.

In the revolution of the seasons, which brought the troop to Taunton, some two or three fixed stars were generally found, who had been wearing their constant course in the same sphere, and these were always welcome to Skinner's house; and on what are technically termed the off-nights, these individuals generally availed themselves of his invitation, and swallowed huge potations of his father's long-stored claret; Skinner preferring that they should drink up this precious hoard rather than punch, (which was a favourite liquor with the corps) because, although the claret was worth ten times more than the liquor desired, he had not occasion to pay out ready money for the lemons. If this appear a strange reason, it is at least his own, given to his trusty housekeeper, when she suggested the introduction of the cheaper beverage, which she, who had no theatrical taste, thought infinitely better adapted to the character and condition of the guests, than the old wine of her old master.

The invitations to Bagsden made to the actors, were regulated only by the good sense

and propriety of the actors themselves, which very correctly dictated the exclusion of certain members of the community, whose salaries and habits of life did not justify their appearance at my hero's table; for in the theatrical profession, unlike most others, the difference of income makes all the difference of rank. A certain salary gives its possessor the important privileges of the first green-room; a good looking-glass, a decanter of tolerably clean water, the lively improprieties of wanton lordlings, and the impotent drivelling of sensual dotards of quality; while a smaller sum per week dooms the children of Thespis to the debasement of an inferior apartment, to which they are mercilessly consigned, in company with figurantes in the ballet, dusty wreaths of flowers, old piano fortes, basket camels, and pantomime properties.

It was according to this judicious and salutary graduation of talent and respectability, that the acceptance of Mr. Skinner's general bidding to Bagsden was regulated; for, as I have already said, although new planets occasionally sparkled in their hemisphere, there were always one or two "old stagers," who did not fail to recollect his hospitalities, and count upon his customary

kindness to themselves and friends, as regularly as if it were to display itself in the shape of Dogget's coat and badge, or Baddely's twelfth cake and punch.

The ladies of the profession were frequently of these parties; but, lest the breath of scandal, respired over the six o'clock black tea and briny toast of the antiquated vestals of Taunton, should taint the fair fame of the actresses, it was generally understood that each unmarried miss was to carry her mamma with her, (if she had such a thing,) or, if not, some discreet matron in the low-comedy line, as a chaperone. That the married ladies should, (if they had any,) take with them their children, and at all events, never appear there, under any circumstances, without their husbands; so that, instead of a mere heartless treat to the players, it should seem that private respectability formed the basis of their social enjoyments.

It was not even during their stay alone that my hero's hospitality was exhibited—for exhibition it was intended to be—towards the Thespians—when they departed, the family ladies were loaded with pickles and preserves, and nuts, and apples, and all the comestibles of the

commissariat; most of which, however, were nothing worth; inasmuch as Skinner had everything made at home "upon principle;" and having, "upon principle," avowed a determination neither to give high wages, nor purchase the best materials for his still-room, his bungling servants, in the plenitude of their unskillfullness, destroyed nine-tenths of every thing they professed to preserve, not excepting even the sugar itself which was bought for their experiments.

For several years before his father's demise, (if he were on the spot,) and since that event, regularly, had Mr. Gervase Skinner thus played with the players, and no harm was done; but now, just as the simple blushing Emma Gray was on the eve of her arrival at the happy age when he might claim her as his own, and just as the matured lover was looking forward to the day, when by marrying "upon principle," he should secure her person and her patrimony; when autumn winds began to blow, and yellow leaves began to fall, with the waning days of September, arrived the accustomed troop; and even before my hero had time to call upon the visitors, play-bills appeared in all the shop win-

dows, and on all the dead walls, announcing the opening of the campaign with Hamlet—Hamlet, by Mr. Wickenton; Laertes, Mr. Kekewich, jun.; Polonius, Mr. Budds; Osric, Mr. Fuggleston; (his first appearance here,) the Queen, Mrs. Mac Brisket; and Ophelia, by Mrs. Fuggleston, (from the Theatres Leek, Bishop's Castle, Bullock-Smithy, and Bolton-le-Moors,) her first appearance here—in which character she will introduce "Mad Tom"—"Home, Sweet Home"—and, "We are a' Noddin"—to which will be added, a farce called "Mrs. Chrichton; or, What a Wonder." Alderman Dumps, Mr. Kekewich; Waiter, Mr. Fuggleston; Lady Adela Dieaway, Mrs. Mac Brisket; and Mrs. Chrichton, by Mrs. Fuggleston; who will perform nineteen different characters, go through the manual and platoon exercise in male attire, standing upon a pewter plate, dance the Minuet de la Cour with Mr. Budds, in full costume, and give imitations of Muscovy ducks, nightingales, the filing of a saw, two cats upon the pantiles, and of several popular London performers; the whole to conclude with her dancing the College Horn-pipe, enveloped in fireworks. Vivat Rex!"

To a theatrical taste what could be more inviting than such an enumeration of accomplishments and performances—the histrionic propensities of Mr. Gervase Skinner were fired on the sudden, and he proceeded to the manager's head-quarters, with a view of doing that, in which the manager himself not unfrequently failed—I mean, getting an audience. Skinner, however, was fortunate, and found his old friend, Mr. Kekewich, at home—as usual, the invitation to Bagsden was given, and, as usual, accepted, and with it came out the sly insinuating desire of being introduced to Mrs. Fuggleston.

"Wonderful woman, Sir!" said Kekewich; "full of talent as an egg's full of meat—husband a stick—*must* have him—part of her articles—pity she married—fine creature, depend upon it—plays Ophelia in high style—finds her own dresses—silk stockings and all—symmetrical figure, sweet temper, and coal-black hair, down to the small of her back—great hit for me—short life and a merry one—snapped up for the London houses—manager sent down a doctor of divinity and two physicians to see her at Leek—nabbed her—snapt her up like a lamb from my flock—her own terms, and an

engagement for her husband—of course, the *carte blanche* made her cut the waggon—accepted the offer, and comes out in the metropolis in three weeks—you'll hear the last of her, Sir—an opportunity not to be missed."

"Has she been long on the stage?" said Skinner.

"Born behind the scenes, Sir," replied Kekewich—"inhaled lamp air with her first breath: somehow, however, she did not acquire celebrity, until she got into a scrape with a lover—the Prince in Richard, or the Page in the Purse, were her outsides, till she became a little suspected of impropriety—then, Sir, she was run after like an innocent hare by a pack of sad dogs—you'll excuse the allegory—however, having created a sensation, she practically gave the lie to calumny and married, purely for love, her present husband, Mr. Fuggleston—between you and me, he is not worth his salt; but he is a *sine quâ non* in her engagements.—Such things happen with our betters, you know, Sir—in political life, Mr. this thing won't take office unless Mr. t'other thing is employed—the same with us in the Thespian kingdom; but she is as correct as Catalani—punctual as clock-work—husband

always behind the scenes, play or not—cloak and clogs always sent, in wet weather—regular maid of her own at the stage door—umbrella and lanthern—no gallantry, no gallivanting—as virtuous as a vestal—and as proud as a peacock."

"You must introduce me forthwith," said Skinner: "I conclude, she will join our little annual fooleries at Bagsden."

"I'll see what can be done," said Kekewich: "I know she would not visit one of the aldermen of Leek, because his wife had once been suspected of a little blind partiality for the apothecary's apprentice—she has her little oddities, her crinkums and crankums—you comprehend, Sir? but, she is a powerful tragedian—commanding figure—fine person, what we in the profession call a capital first night woman—yet we all have our failings, Mr. Skinner."

Skinner bowed.

"—Present company always excepted, Sir," said Kekewich, smiling at his own urbanity. "Mrs. Fuggleston has *hers*—she is blessed, Sir, with an appetite—a woman of strong feeling, and full of sentiment—but fond of her meals—you understand me, Sir. This is not by way of

hint—for at Bagsden plenty always crowns the board—but it is fact—and I let you into the trait—the dinner trait you'll say, I know—in order that you may not be struck at once. I found it out, merely by acting with her—whenever I had to embrace her on the stage, I detected an over addiction to onions—you'll excuse this little enlightenment, but it *is* so—in Juliet, three or four nights since, I discovered garlic amongst the honey: however, this is but a speck upon the orb of day, and *I* must not complain, for she draws wonderfully."

"An artist too?" said Skinner, enquiringly.

"A powerful artist, I assure you," replied Kekewich; "but not, as I take it, in your sense of the word—to draw, with us, means to attract—I mean, she attracts."

"I am not much surprised at that," said my hero, "considering the variety of her talent."

"No, to be sure, she is versatile enough," continued the manager, "and full of ability. She sings admirably—her Ophelia, I think, you'll say, Sir, is a beautiful bit of acting; the pathos—the madness—the melody—all first-rate; and in private life, when you come to know her, you'll find her quite the domestic creature—quite

the pussy-cat on her own hearth; does a mutton-chop to a turn with the gravy in it; and for fried tripe, Sir, there is not her equal in England. Shall we go call upon her now, I'll be sworn she is at home?"

"Where do they lodge?" said Skinner.

"At the pastrycook's," said Kekewich. "Heard of your excellent Taunton mutton-pies, no doubt—she says in *her* way that a good cook is a man of good scents—likes the smell—she's quite a wag when she is pleased—prodigious hit in London, Sir."

"Let us go, then," said Skinner; "I shall be too happy to make their acquaintance, and proffer my invitation."

"With all my heart," replied the manager. "I'll just direct my boy to get in a few things we want, to start with, and be with you in the twinkling of an eye."

"Pray," said Skinner, "what has gone with Miss Hardiman, who was——"

"——Mum, Sir," interrupted Kekewich; "not a word about that—she has left the company."

"And Miss Bolsover—— ?" said Skinner.

"I have lost *her* too," replied the manager.

We happened to play at a sea-port town last autumn: a sloop of war chanced to be paid off while we were there, and I never could account for it, but I lost my tragedy-heroine, my principal singer, two figurantes, and my low comedy old woman, at one fell swoop. I found my Deborah Dowlas, however, at the boatswain's lodgings, and luckily recovered her, for *she* would have been an irretrievable loss. Young women, with pretty faces and good figures, are plenty enough in England; but a steady-going fat low comedy woman, with broad humour, and strong lungs, is, indeed, a treasure."

Kekewich retired for a few moments, to issue money for the ingredients requisite to prepare a tragedy, and left Skinner in a reverie touching Miss Bolsover, whose real name was Bumpus, but who had assumed a softer and more aristocratic appellation; for, although Skinner had never been seriously wounded in any of his skirmishes with these transient beauties, still, if the truth were known, Miss Bumpus, alias Bolsover, had attracted more of his attention than any of her play-mates; and it was not without a feeling of something like disappointment, that

he heard of her defection from the troop, under circumstances strongly indicative of his not having excited a feeling in her gentle breast exactly similar to that which he had begun to think had agitated his own.

Kekewich, however, cut short my hero's meditations; for having tied on a clean shirt collar, and made his boy brush a little of yesterday's dirt from his boots, he stood at Skinner's side, ready to lead him to the house which contained the miracle of the theatrical world, the lovely Mrs. Amelrosa Fuggleston.

Towards the fulfilment of their intentions, they proceeded forthwith to the well-known pastry-cook's; and Kekewich rapped at the door in an authoritative style, in which he felt himself justified, both by the relative situation of the Fugglestons and himself, as well as by the aristocratic pretensions of his companion. A delay of a minute or two ensued before it was opened, during which period a scuffling and scrambling about, on the first floor occurred, which, owing to the size and structure of the house, were sufficiently audible without.

At length a maid-servant gave them entrance, and the moment they stepped into the passage,

their noses were regaled by the most savoury odour of fried onions, which pervaded all the "ambient air," and afforded pretty conclusive evidence that the Fugglestons were at dinner. The maid-servant, however, said that her mistress had a bad head-ache, and had lain down, and that her master was out. Unfortunately, as it should seem for her reputation for veracity, both of these statements were on the instant disproved; for up the kitchen stairs came a jolly-looking woman, with a huge dish of smoking rump-steaks; and down the drawing-room stairs stepped Mr. Fuggleston himself, who deemed it necessary to pay his manager the respect of explaining Mrs. F.'s indisposition, and get rid of the stranger's visit with decency and decorum.

Mr. Fuggleston, however, underwent the ceremony of introduction to Skinner, and expressed himself mightily pleased and highly delighted at the important event, regretting the state of Mrs. F.'s health—hoped she would recover by the next day—thought it might be only the fatigue of travelling—delicate constitution—nervous habit—quite a hot-house plant, and all that sort of thing; which, however, he seasonably curtailed, in order to hurry the de-

parture of his visitors, and hasten his own return to his darling and his dainties.

Mr. Skinner took his leave, and hoped to be more fortunate another time; and as he and Mr. Kekewich quitted the door, Fuggleston called the latter back, to press him to get rid of his patron, and come and join them in their steak; to which, as they had been caught in the fact of dining at home, he *said*, Mrs. F. and he had intended to invite him, but that they thought he was engaged; the sincerity of this latter statement being equal to that, which characterised the humbug about Mrs. F.'s indisposition, and his own rapture at being introduced to my hero; of whom Kekewich had been in the habit of giving the most ludicrous imitations to the Fugglestons, and, indeed, to all his other friends, whenever the hospitable squire happened to be absent.

Mr. Kekewich, who had earlier in the day made up his mind to dine with somebody, and hitherto had kept close to the squire, in order to make *him* his host; moved by the love of ease and fried onions, immediately agreed to cut his friend, and return forthwith; since, if he put his plan of dining at Bagsden with Skinner, into

execution, he must have the trouble of returning almost immediately to attend to the business of preparation in Taunton; whereas, by dining in the town, he should spare himself the hurry and the walk, and reserve his opportunity of dining with Skinner until he could sit long and late after his repast, to the detriment of the said Skinner's cellar.

"Well, Sir," said the manager to the squire, "which way are you going?"

"I am for home," said the squire. "You'll come and dine with me to-day?"

"Sorry I can't to-day," said Kekewich. "I have got to meet a couple of men on business at the Castle at half-past three, where I shall be kept late."

"Half-past three?" said the squire, as innocent as a lamb; "why, man alive, it is just four now."

"Gad, so it is," said Kekewich. "Your worship's society beguiles time, as the poet says. I had no idea it was so late. I am afraid I have tired them out—will you excuse me?"

"To be sure," said Skinner; "and if you can get away, remember I dine at six—alone—no party—snug—and delighted to see you."

"I'll certainly come if I can, Sir," said Kekewich; and taking leave of his patron, hurried down towards the market-place, until having watched Skinner round the corner of the alley leading to the church-yard, he bounced back to the pastry-cook's, and darting through the shop, ran up stairs to the *salle à manger* of his friend; and knocking at the door, imitated Skinner's voice and manner, begging to be let in, to the infinite amusement of his host and hostess, who were quite delighted to see him; although, if he had not actually discovered that they really had a dinner, they would have seen him at Jericho before they would have invited him to partake of it.

CHAPTER II.

To great Apelles, when young Ammon brought
The darling idol of his captive heart;
And the pleased nymph with kind attention sat,
To have her charms recorded by his art.

The amorous master owned her potent eyes,
Sighed when he looked, and trembled as he drew;
Each flowing line confirmed his first surprise,
And as the work advanced, the passion grew.

PRIOR.

It will be necessary for the reader's better understanding of this history, that he should, while the joyous Thespians are dining, take a brief trip from the High-street of Taunton, to the suburbs of an ancient city in the north of England, the name of which for cogent reasons I must beg to conceal; in which resided the modest, simple Emma Gray.

There was about this lovely girl what my worthy friend, Mr. Rodney, would have called a

"viridity of intellect which was truly refreshing, a newness and a single-mindedness unalloyed by the baser attributes of *this* world, which were highly delightful;" or, as a plainer spoken man would say, she was kind hearted, amiable, ingenuous, unaffected, and affectionate. That she was wealthy, seemed to be her principal misfortune, since by the will of her father, and in the eye of her uncle, with whom she resided, *that* fact had entailed upon her a marriage with my hero, of whom she had seen little, and of whom, what she *had* seen, did certainly not very much prepossess her in his favour.

It would be quite superfluous here to cite authorities to the number *citeable*, touching the perverseness of love-matters, the obstinacy of fate, the blindness of fortune, &c. &c.; and perhaps at this period of my tale, equally unnecessary to observe that Emma Grey, bound by no ties save those to which herself had been no party, had been unable to controul a feeling of affection which her heart had admitted for one, who, like all the lovers of novelists, was at once amiable, talented, gentle, kind, true, handsome, accomplished, *and poor!*

He that had won her affections, and who was

himself devoted to her charms, boasted no noble blood—no teeming coffers. His young heart leaped not at the trumpet's sound, nor answered to the boatswain's shrill call; neither had he laboured hard and long to make the worse appear the better cause in courts of law; nor studied deeply to instruct his fellow-men in lore of piety and virtue; Physic, and all its quacking arts he equally eschewed. For *him* music as a profession had no attractions; the lighter cares of dancing weighed not a feather on his mind—it was at the shrine of art he bowed, and toiled to paint the beauties he admired—he was, in plain English, an artist.

Those who have mixed much in the world, must feel conscious of the varied qualifications for society which every artist of any standing must inevitably possess. The pursuits connected with, and actually dependent upon, a progress in his own profession, tend insensibly to elevate the mind, refine the taste, and correct the judgment; rendering the painter a man of general accomplishment, and making his society at once desirable, agreeable, and instructive. Upon one point only does he fail; I mean the appreciation of his own merits, and the merits

of others. There is not a dauber in existence who spoils canvas by contract at so much per square foot, who does not view his own works with doting partiality, and wonder why the fools of fashion prefer the President to *him*.

This sort of mental opthalmia is a pretty general disorder, even in matters where art is *not* concerned. Every man with whom I ever met, has had the best horse in England, the best claret in Christendom, the most virtuous wife in the universe, and the most charming children in all the world. Upon these points each individual sees himself and *his*, far beyond the reach of comparison, and, together with that of his skill in stirring a fire, piques himself upon being without a parallel. Blessed blindness! to be satisfied with what one has, is the true way to be happy; and if habit, self-complacency, or that enviable mal-formation of the retina which prevents the natural inversion of every object presented, (so essential to its correctness,) can convert wind-gall and spavin into speed and bottom, pickled cabbage juice into Falernian, a wanton into a vestal, and half a dozen fatuitous frights into a group of intellectual little angels; in the name of kindness and

humanity, why disturb the satisfaction of the patient?

That Frederick Benson imagined himself equal to Lawrence, I do not pretend to advance: that he over-rated his own talents, I think it only fair to surmise; but if he did, it is only fair on the other hand to say, that the success of his portraits, the local reputation he had acquired, and the encouragement which some of those munificent patrons of native talent, who have, by their liberality and princely support, raised it to the height of excellence it has attained, justified in some degree the little vanity that would now and then peep out when he was describing his last picture, which, (as it invariably is with every other artist,) was certainly the very best he had ever painted.

In the eyes of Emma Gray his works surpassed those of Rubens, Vandyke, or Titian; and when her own portrait glowed upon the easel, it was admitted on all hands, somehow or another, nobody could tell how, that it *was* without any doubt his *chef-d'œuvre*. Of one fact the reader should be made aware—that it occupied at least five times as many sittings, (each sitting being five times longer than any

other person's), as any other picture, to finish, touch, and retouch this favourite production.

That Emma Gray was a good subject for an artist must be confessed; her eyes were sparkling bright, and as black as sloes; her lips as red as cherries; her downy cheeks were like the blushing rose, and her teeth were as white as snow. Who could sit and paint all these, and the raven tresses that wantoned over her forehead, and sketch the outlines of a figure so graceful and symmetrical as her's, with the same calmness and steadiness as he might have possessed while drawing from a model, or transmiting to to canvas the hard features of an antiquated virgin, or the rubicund cheeks of an overgrown alderman?

Some men, however, are professionally thrown much, and frequently into the society of all that is graceful and lovely, who, by the laws and regulations of society, would be inevitably ruined if their natural feelings were allowed to have their way. An over-gallant physician is some day sure to be found out, and fall; an insinuating lawyer, if detected in infringing the most rigid rules of Platonism in his counsellings or consultations with a fair client, foun-

ders; professors of the arts and sciences, (who, although paid for their instructions, have feelings and passions like other men,) must habitually controul all thoughts, all sentiments, save those strictly applicable to the subject of their lessons. Even the dancing-master, who is practically brought into perpetual contact with his pupil, must, in the exercise of his profession, conquer those passions which his own instructions are in other spheres intended to excite. So with poor Frederick Benson: adoring his sitter as he did, and gazing, as he could not fail to do, upon all her blooming beauties, he felt professionally bound to affect a coldness that he could not feel.

Emma, when instructed to "look at him," certainly performed *her* part with more sincerity. She threw into her eyes an expression which he had never seen there before; but *that* he attributed only to her desire to "look interesting" in the picture. He placed her in the attitude in which he wished her to sit—she was as passive under his guidance as an infant—he raised her countenance into what he thought the best light—there it remained; and when he undertook to place her hand in the position which

he considered most graceful, it staid precisely in the spot on which he laid it, although his own lingered there too. And so this went on, and Emma sat, and Frederick painted, until at the conclusion of the somewhat tedious process, (tedious at least to Emma's aunt, who was always present, playing propriety), the likeness of the lovely girl was splendidly painted on the canvas, and indelibly engraven on the heart of the enraptured artist.

The picture finished, Mr. Benson was to be consulted as to the light in which it should be hung; for this purpose he called—Emma's aunt received him—he complimented the worthy virgin upon some point upon which she piqued herself; she introduced her brother, he fell into conversation with the painter, liked him, and invited him to dinner. The invitation was accepted. After dinner came tea—after tea music—Benson played the flute—promised to bring it the next evening to accompany Emma. Emma sang, Frederick took part in her duets. On the following Monday they would make up a little party: Miss Pimpernel, and Mrs. Wagstaffe, and her brother, Mr. Simpson, would all come. They all sang catches, and glees, and

songs, beautifully—it would be *so* agreeable. Emma's harp wanted strings—Frederick Benson knew where the best were to be got—he would call in the morning and bring some, or, perhaps, Miss Gray would like to walk to the shop and choose them herself: if so, he would shew her where it was. What time would she like to go? —after luncheon? "Had not Mr. Benson better lunch here?" said the aunt. Emma coloured like scarlet—the old gentleman said "to be sure,—do, Mr. Benson; we shall be very glad to see you." Benson bowed, his heart beating all the while, his hands as cold as ice—a little more music—symptoms of a tray—sociability and a round table—the old gentleman's "something warm going to bed"—half the wing of a cold boiled chicken, and a wine-glass half-full of weak sherry and water for Emma. Benson quite at home, helping tongue; the old lady cramming him with what she called "nourishment," and the old gentleman pressing him to do as *he did*—little clock on the chimney-piece strikes twelve—"bless my heart, who would have thought it so late!"—Mr. Benson on his legs—"good night" —"ring the bell, Emma dear," shakes hands all round. "At one o'clock to-morrow then we

expect you," says Emma. "Certainly," says Benson. Servant appears to open the door. "Good night, good night"—exit Benson, good-nighting all.

This is something of the way in which the acquaintance began. In lighter matters, like those which occupied my last story, "*ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute*," and what I have just sketched, formed only a short prelude to what was to come. When the harp strings were bought, the party returned; a fresh invitation secured a fresh delight. The third day brought the flute; the next day was Sunday, and after church, a prolonged walk occupied the time until dinner. With Monday came the little musical party; every body was agreeable; time flew; Benson was the theme of every body's praise, and nobody wondered that Miss Gray was so fond of Mr. Benson. This last remark proved, alas! that their proceedings, however unconscious themselves, had not been unobserved upon, and will, perhaps, forewarn the reader that stormy days are yet in store for the unhappy lovers.

But we must leave them for the present and get back to Taunton—into the very focus of

attraction—the theatre, in which, as yet unintroduced to the heroine of the night, Skinner, ere the curtain was drawn, had placed himself in his wonted place, anxiously expecting the treat for which his appetite had been so sharply whetted.

The awful moment approached—the play commenced: Hamlet himself was fifty-five and fat—Polonius a boy, with a grey wig—the Queen a gorgon, and Laertes a lamp-lighter; but when Ophelia came, the house resounded with applause—covered with laurels reaped at Bullock Smithy and Bolton-le-Moors, the triumphant heroine stood before them, and Gervase Skinner, like the rest of the Taunton people, confessed her sovereign sway.

Her complexion was dark—her hair profusely luxuriant—or, to use Mr. Kekewich's description, "down to the small of her back"—her figure extremely good—her hand and arm lily white, and beautifully formed—her foot small, and her ankle taper—her voice was melodious—her eyes were expressive—her action was graceful—her manner elegant. Such a phœnix, in short, had never shone in that place; the farmers' boys owned the soft infection, and thunders of approbation resounding from hob-nailed

shoes, rent the fane of which she was the splendid ornament.

But if Ophelia won their hearts, interspersed as it was with Scotch melodies and modern ballads, the nineteen characters in the farce rivetted the chains. The pathos of Shakspeare, enlivened by the music of Mr. Bishop, however touching, was not more powerfully given than the facetiæ of the afterpiece. The minuet was all grace, the manual exercise all firmness, the ducks, cats, and saws, nature itself; while the climax produced by the hornpipe in "white tights"and fire-works, exceeded the most sanguine expectations of manager, public, and Mr. Gervase Skinner; and exhibited the well-formed figure of the lady to the greatest possible advantage. Suffice it to say, it was the *coup de grace* as far as my hero was concerned; the faint beauties of the blushing Bolsover, and the soft traits of the gentle Hardiman fled from his *mental* vision, and were expunged from the tablet of his memory by the overwhelming attractions of the unrivalled Fuggleston.

For once, and once only, during the evening, did the thoughts of Mr. Gervase Skinner revert

to the gentle modest Emma Gray—indeed, it would have been difficult to trace any association between the unassuming, kind, and graceful child of nature, the pride and ornament of domestic life, and the animated being who occupied him at the present moment. Once, as I have just said, he *did* call her to mind, and thought that if Mrs. Fuggleston were not married, and *he* himself not under a matrimonial engagement, how happy he should be to make a tender of his hand, with a participation in all the charms of Bagsden Parva, to the accomplished creature then before him.

Love at first sight, may, perhaps, generally speaking, not be lasting, but there *are* instances on record of its immutable potency. That Skinner was sufficiently susceptible to have been so seriously wounded on the instant, some have doubted, because he had already remained so long unmarried; but it should be recollected, that for several years he had been privately engaged in matrimony, and that before that, his "truant disposition," and the latent feeling of economy, (ever present to his thoughts, although perpetually concealed) had prompted

him to "sip," and "rove" rather than fix himself for life, where an adequate settlement on the other side was not quite certain.

That Skinner was a moral man, no one can doubt, for he did every thing "upon principle," and most assuredly when he felt ravenously anxious to expedite his introduction to Mrs. Fuggleston, so that the very next day might see her under his roof, he was not conscious of his real motives—they remained to develope themselves in time, or rather time was wanting to mature them: his first impulse was admiration, and how very often do we admire what no power on earth could make us love; but if his admiration were composed of a mixture of the professional and personal, as far as related to the lady in question, he felt it quite impossible to condense or contain it in his own proper bosom, and yielding to an impulse which he saw no particular reason for controuling, he flew, rather than ran, to the stage-door to offer his congratulations to Mr. Kekewich, on the acquisition he had made to his troop in the person of the divine Amelrosa; and tender his condolence upon her anticipated defection from the society.

Mrs. Fuggleston, however, was not to be caught so easily: the night was rainy—and, long before Mr. Gervase Skinner reached the green-room, the public vehicle of Taunton, which during the last few years, had ripened from the chrysalism of a sedan-chair into the gayer beauties of a fly, had borne the divine fair one to her home in the costume which had so captivated my hero, and which being her own property, she chose to keep on, until in the secret solitude of her own chamber, she could exchange the trappings of mockery for the more comfortable wrapper, in which, after fascinating the public with her splendid talents, she intended to fry a little tripe for supper.

Into the arcana of the Fuggleston cabinet, Gervase Skinner was not that night doomed to be admitted: Mr. Fuggleston, however, in the name of his lady, and under the sanction of Mrs. Mac Brisket, who had been often before a welcome guest at Bagsden, and was, I believe, the identical lady who had been recovered from the boatswain's chaste embrace, and who enacted not only the low comedy parts, but the high tragedy characters on an emergency, accepted my hero's invitation for the

next day. Upon that lady's respectability, the whole of the ladies of the company had the firmest reliance; but one point upon the present occasion was specially to be observed—Since the dominion of Mrs. Fuggleston had been absolutely established in the company, nothing in the shape of female, youthful or pretty, was permitted to join in any of their pleasant parties; a candle-light beauty has a mortal aversion from the roses and lilies of nature; and the nice red and white of one or two of the "young ladies," would have decidedly excluded them from a participation in the invitation, had not the fact that their salaries did not reach the prescribed standard of respectability, already barred their entrance to the fane of patronage and liberality, at Bagsden: for the enjoyment of which, the receipt of three pounds per week, paid regularly to *the* Fuggleston, had properly qualified that fascinating fair.

Happily, however, the first singing lady of the corps happened to be the niece of a respectable hair-dresser in Taunton, who, having a proper regard for his relation, (after a serious quarrel, however, with his wife upon the point,) was "very happy" to see the fair performer, and

of course her *play*-fellows, at his house, where they made it out extremely well, and had before their departure so far converted one of the barber's daughters to their free-hearted philosophy, as to persuade her to join the company. Mr. Strop, however, luckily discovered the scheme, and cut short the negociation by interposing his parental authority to prevent the possibility of such a calamity occurring to his family, and married his hoyden daughter, the following Sunday, to a respectable chimney-sweeper, who had long been paying his addresses to her.

What a pity it is, that the misconduct and irregularity of a few members of a profession, to which have belonged a Siddons—a Farren —a Brunton, and a Bolton, should, to use the words of a fair poetess, now no more, "property the whole;" and that the pure and classical current of dramatic life should be tainted and corrupted in its course, by the filth, which a few of the lower orders who trade upon its surface, cast into it.

There is, as we have already said, no community in which the respectability of the individual so entirely depends upon himself, as that of the theatre. As a proof of it, it is noto-

rious that while many of its members, male and female, are justly received and welcomed as ornaments to the best circles, there are others at the same moment, who, like the *prima donna* at Taunton, are regarded with contempt and disgust, even by what, excepting themselves, may be considered the very lowest dregs of society.

Morality or propriety, however, it must be confessed had infinitely less to do with the exclusion of the young ladies from the parties in which Mrs. Fuggleston figured, than pique and jealousy. Beauty, it is true, is transient, talent lasting, and the *éclat* of the former, yields in time, to the development of the latter; but in a "circuit," as the Thespians call it, since the stay of the company in each place is not long, it occurred to Mrs. Fuggleston, that the power of bright eyes and downy cheeks, smooth skins, and fine complexions, might have its full effect before the superior attractions of mind and conversation could come into play; and, therefore, she laid it down as a rule, not to visit where the young ladies were admitted; carefully sticking to Mrs. Mac Brisket, who was her senior by several years; and, who, moreover, had recently

given up the wiggery and daubery with which she had, since the age of forty, tried to play "pretty" in private life. The worthy Mac Brisket, who was all in all with Amelrosa, had now descended into the vale of years, and was not ashamed to own it; although the somewhat recent affair of the boatswain, certainly justified the idea that the tender passion was still alive in her bosom. It might have been; grey hairs are no evidence,—the tops of volcanos are covered with snow; and there is no judging accurately at what age love begins, or ends his dominion over the female heart; however, the boatswain's story was not generally known, and, besides, Mrs. Fuggleston was determined to see no fault in her friend Mrs. Mac Brisket, and accordingly considered the whole affair as either a joke, or a calumny, no matter which; and so Mrs. Mac Brisket acted foil to Mrs. Fuggleston, and a great alliance existed between them.

In pursuance of this treaty offensive and defensive, Mrs. Mac Brisket, with Mr. Kekewich and his son, (to make it more correct,) were invited to join the Fugglestons at Bagsden on the morrow; for the achievement of which great

purpose a carriage, constructed under the eye of Mr. Skinner himself, was to be despatched to their lodgings in the forenoon.

This vehicle was contrived to carry eight, with one horse; "upon principle;" that is to say, the principle of saving a *second* horse, and the tax for a second pair of wheels. It had been thrice overturned, and repaired at an expence equal to its original price. One horse had been so seriously injured by one of the accidents, as to have been sold for fifteen pounds, having cost fifty; and a servant, who was driving, so sadly hurt that the surgeon's bill amounted to more than the board wages of the man for a twelvemonth; but then it was all done "upon principle;" and since it was in shape and make a perfect "non descript," it was known by no other appellation in the county, than the "Skinner." This pleased Gervase; for having discovered during his sojourn in London that an illustrious Scotch Duke had lent his title to a hot gravy pot; that the House of Harrington had dignified a one horse chaise with its patronymic; that the name of Monteith had been indiscriminately bestowed upon water glasses and

music stands; and, in short, that the Tilburies, Dennets, Spencers, Canterburies, and half a hundred other objects of daily use, and recurrence to the eye, derived their appellations from their ingenious inventors or contrivers, he felt rather flattered than otherwise, in having himself thus publicly acknowledged and recorded, as the designer of a carriage at once so commodious and economical as that in question.

In the "Skinner," then, at two o'clock, of the morrow, the animated party were to be conveyed to Bagsden, where, if circumstances permit, the reader shall, in due season, find them assembled.

CHAPTER III.

> The princess next her painted charms displays,
> Where every look the pencil's art betrays;
> The callow *squire* at distance feeds his eyes,
> And silently for paint and washes dies.
>
> ADDISON.

TIME, no sluggard in the world, seemed for once to crawl at Bagsden Parva, on the important day fixed for the primary visitation of the fair Fuggleston. The calico covers were early withdrawn from the damask chairs and sofas in the drawing-room; and looking-glasses, which had long hung slumbering in their cotton envelopes, gave all their brightness to the scene; and yet old Chronos hurried not. Gervase Skinner tried to drive him on, by watching all the movements of his housekeeper and her maids, and by reading and re-reading his cellar-book, with what he called his butler; a worthy man and honest, but whom Gervase, "upon principle," never trusted with the key of his stores; and

who had, early in his career, secured a duplicate of that, of which his master so carefully kept the custody. Pickles, preserves, and tarts were all in preparation under the eye of the squire; and under his personal inspection walnuts were beaten from the tall trees, and the apple's clustering bough was thinned of its fruitful load, to grace the teeming board.

At length the party were seen wending their way towards the door, and when the moment actually arrived, for which my hero had so long been wishing, a fit of nervousness seized him, and he made a precipitate retreat to his own room, in order to collect enough of his scattered spirits, to enable him to endure the introduction to his fair visitor with propriety and composure.

The party was composed of Mr. Kekewich and his son, Mr. and Mrs. Fuggleston, and Mrs. Mac Brisket before mentioned. The elder Kekewich and Skinner's servant were old friends, and the greeting from the man to the manager was singularly affectionate. The noise occasioned by the "disembarkation" of the visitors brought others of the domestics towards the hall to look at the players; and before my hero had time to regulate his dress and his spirits,

the wags had made the house resound with imitations of the various animals by which they were surrounded. Kekewich, senior, mimicked the poodle, young Mr. Kekewich did ducks, and Mr. Fuggleston, whose skill in ornithological similitudes was great, caricatured the cockatoo: whilst the ladies busied themselves in criticising the polish of the furniture, and the cleanliness of the window curtains.

The particular point of Mr. Fuggleston's conversation consisted in quotations, chiefly from Shakspeare, which, by the most absurd application of them to passing events, he occasionally contrived to make amusing enough. Mrs. Mac Brisket, when permitted, indulged in the repetition of professional tales of the olden time; while Mrs. Fuggleston's mind was divided, as the manager has already informed us, between the study of the stage and the cares of the kitchen. Indeed the smell of cookery, which gratified her acutely sensible nose upon her entrance to Bagsden, was not the least agreeable presage of the pleasures of the day.

After a suitable pause, during which the Thespians had by turns ridiculed and joked upon every piece of furniture and ornament in

my hero's drawing-room, Skinner appeared; and just as Mrs. Fuggleston had declared with a sigh to young Mr. Kekewich, that she thought a boiled leg of pork and peas-pudding the most delicate dish in Christendom, was introduced to and received by that lady with one of her most graceful courtesies, and a look—gods! what a look! which nearly struck the modest squire to the earth.

"Sweet place, Sir, you have got here," said the lady, with reference to the grounds which had formed the subject for their jests and drolleries five minutes before; "all in such good taste —so quiet—so retired—so——"

"Mrs. Mac Brisket, how do *you* do?" said Skinner, overwhelmed with the compliments of his new visitor, "you are no stranger, Ma'am —Mr. Fuggleston, I am extremely glad to see *you* here."

"Sir," said Fuggleston, bowing, "you do as Lady Macbeth advises—

'Bear welcome in your eye, your hand, your tongue.'"

Mr. Kekewich here presented his son to my hero, who gave him an equally cordial greeting; and immediately after proposed to the ladies,

that the servants should show them the rooms destined for their night's accommodation, himself proceeding to point out the apartments of the two single gentlemen.

"This first room is your's, Kekewich," said my hero to the manager.

"'Who lies i' the second chamber?'"

said Fuggleston, who was just behind them.

"You and Mrs. Fuggleston, if you please," said Skinner, with all the good nature in the world, taking the quotation as a matter-of-fact inquiry.

"Mr. F., my dear, have you got my bag?" said Mrs. Fuggleston to her husband.

"Yes, my love," said the obedient husband.

"What a delightful room," exclaimed the lady, upon seeing her apartment opened.

"I am very happy you like it," said Gervase. "Mrs. Mac Brisket, you are to sleep in the green room."

'Professionally applicable," said Kekewich, senior.

"Beautiful view!" exclaimed Kekewich, junior.

"Pretty scenery!" said the innocent Skinner.

"——Machinery, dresses, and decorations," added one of the wags.

"Sweet villa!" said Mrs. Mac Brisket.

"Yes," said Skinner; "it has a good effect—the white house upon the lawn, snugly sheltered by trees."

"Beautiful, Sir," said Mrs. Fuggleston; "I said as we came along, that it looked at a distance exactly like a nice poached egg on spinach."

In the midst of the laugh which followed this, Mrs. Fuggleston retired to her room and shut the door.

"Mrs. F. is a good judge of effect," said Kekewich—"never misses a point—capital exit that, Fuggleston."

Another laugh announced the aptness of the manager's allusion.

Having stowed the Thespians in their various apartments, mine host descended to counsel with his butler, and make speedy preparation for the dinner; the ceremonials of which I shall omit, seeing that the performers played their parts with so much earnestness and activity, in the discussion of soup and fish, trios of

boiled chickens; and roasted sucking-pig, illustrated with sauce of clouted cream and currants, that they left themselves neither time nor opportunity for any observation worthy to be recorded. Indeed, one only member of the society had tact enough to conceal the rapacity of appetite which in fact affected the whole party, or to *appear* to divide the attention which all the others undisguisedly devoted to the meal. That this one was Mrs. Fuggleston, who shall doubt? There was a soft, sly, insinuating sort of personal attention in her manner to Skinner, the force and power of which he fully felt, and duly appreciated.

It was Mrs. Fuggleston's principle to honour the maker of a feast, and to reverence the master of a house. In a very few minutes she saw of what stuff Gervase was made, and determined to mould the unfortunate victim to her purposes. It was not merely at Bagsden Parva that she resolved to make him useful, she had more extended views than his small villa could command, and flew at higher game than chickens, tongue, or roasted pig. She was on the eve of a London engagement: Skinner had, early in the day, mentioned his intention of visiting the

"great city"—to secure such a friend upon her first arrival in the metropolis would be most important. His money would procure certain articles of finery, which were wanting to her public magnificence. His protection would be everything to a new comer—a patron from the country in her train would stamp her respectability and influence in the provinces; and give her a weight which, in addition to the testimonials of the doctor of divinity, and the two medical referees of the London manager, would quite set her up. In short, it was pretty certain that whatever merit she might possess as a performer, her tact as a *manager* was by no means to be despised.

Skinner was quite enchanted with the brilliancy of his guests, although now and then a little puzzled at their allusions; their jokes were chiefly local or professional, and very frequently my excellent friend Gervase was, to use a modern phrase of general acceptation, "basketted." When he heard Fuggleston, who wanted a glass of something strong, "after his game," bid him—

"Summon up his *dearest spirits*;"

he took it literally, and, much against the grain,

ordered up some Curaçoa, adding, that he, "upon principle," drank nothing but Hodges, or Burnett, upon such occasions—"No sooner said than done," cried Fuggleston—and some of the commonest British full-proof was forthwith produced. The gist of the quotation was perfectly lost upon Skinner, when Fuggleston, taking the glass in his hand, exclaimed—

"Now is the woodcock near the *gin* ;"

but still he laughed, until he nearly cried, because he saw the others laugh; and so, in truth, it was a mighty merry party; and long before the ladies retired, Mrs. Fuggleston's feelings toward the squire had been made sufficiently manifest, by signs and tokens, which those who have mixed in such society, know to be given by certain conventional rubbings and treadings, performed under tables against the knees, or on the feet of the objects to be enlightened.

Fuggleston, who was no blinder than necessary, saw exactly what was going on; but he had so much reliance on his wife's prudence and knowledge of the world, that he rather enjoyed the fun, as likely to be productive of some benefit,

(whether merely theatrical or not, as yet he could not guess,) than felt annoyed, at what a man of proper feeling would have set to rights in an instant: however, *he* was contented, and Mr. Gervase Skinner perfectly happy.

The ladies sat a prodigious time after dinner, nor would they have departed till much later, had not Mr. F., as his wife called him, actually driven them off by a quotation—

"'The red wine must first rise in their fat cheeks, my lord; then we shall have them talk us to silence,'"

cried he.

"That's by no means genteel, Mr. F.," said the heroine.

"It is a sort of hint," said Mrs. Mac Brisket, hastily finishing a huge bumper which she had just begun to sip deliberately, in order that nothing might be wasted.

"If you are for a stroll," said Skinner unwittingly to the strollers, "you'll find a pleasant walk in the rookery: that is, if you don't dislike the noise."

"What noise, Sir?" said Mrs. Fuggleston.

"'The cause, the cause, my soul,'

as Othello says," cried Fuggleston.

"Exactly so," said Skinner, "the caws—that is what I meant."

"Oh dear, not I," said Mrs. Fuggleston: "I think the sound quite romantic. It inspires a thousand indescribable feelings. And what a nice thing a rook-pie is, Mr. Skinner, with a bit of tender rump-steak in the bottom of it."

"Mr. Skinner has heard of chattering pyes," replied her husband, "'in dismal concord sung,' as Shakspeare says."

"Well!" exclaimed the lady, "I never heard any thing half so rude as that, in my life —come, Mrs. Mac B., let us beat our retreat"—and then, turning to our hero, she added, with one of her very best Lydian languishes, "you'll not be *very* long after us, Mr. S."

Poor Gervase! *that* was the finishing blow to the conquest—he could not speak; he looked again; and although it must be admitted that his countenance was not the most expressive in the world, he suited the action to the look, and pressing the hand which he so gallantly held, felt a reciprocal squeeze, which confirmed him in the opinion, that he had made a hit, (or as Mr. Fuggleston would have quoted it, "a very palpable hit,") and that Mrs. Fuggle-

ston, for the *first time* in her life, was really smitten.

After the departure of the fair one, poor Gervase could not rally, and though he found that the wine passed briskly, and that his bell was rung rapidly under the active *management* of his vice, he was quite unfitted for the gay society, by which he was surrounded. Kekewich, according to annual custom, sang a comic song, with "patter," (as he called it,) between each verse: but the gibes and jests, which were wont "to keep the table in a roar," fell unheeded upon Skinner's ear. Nay, so perfectly abstracted was he, that he did not even detect the capital imitation of *himself*, for which, as I have before said, Mr. Kekewich was eminently famous in his own circle, and which that worthy personage, implicitly relying upon the impenetrability of my hero, actually introduced at his own table, for the purpose of delighting his play-fellows, at the expense of their host.

Pleasures, however refined, must have an end, and tea and coffee being announced, the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing-room; where they found Mrs. Fuggleston directing the administration of the former beverage with all the grace and elegance imaginable.

"We have not been long, Mrs. Fuggleston," said my hero.

"To *us* it appeared long," replied the fair lady.

"To me still longer," rejoined the squire, in a whisper.

And hereabouts was set up a dreadful yell, which was speedily followed by the entrance of two or three of the squire's dogs, which, the moment they entered the apartment, manifested not only the most disagreeable activity and uneasiness, but an inexplicable affection for Mrs. Fuggleston; they all beset her with an animation wholly unaccountable; she jumped up from the table; at her again they were, and the more she ran, the more they flew.

"Why, Squire," cried Fuggleston—

"'Thy hounds will make the welkin ring, and fetch shrill echoes from the hollow earth.'"

"The deuce take the dogs," said Skinner: "lie down, Sir; down, Ranger; down, Romp. down."

"Romp!" exclaimed the actor: "Ranger—

'Ay, mocker, that's the dog's name, R is for the dog,'

as the nurse says."

"What shall I do?" screamed Mrs. Fuggles-

ton, who was really alarmed, "I know what it is—I know what it is now," added she, in a tone of delight, "your feet, Mr. F., your feet—my bag, my bag."

This, which was Greek to Skinner, was perfectly comprehended by the Thespian, who, with the activity of a harlequin, snatched his wife's reticle out of her hand, and rushed from the room, like another Actæon, with the hounds at his heels.

It now became necessary to solve the mystery, and the fact was declared to Skinner, who was wretched at the misbehaviour of his favourite quadrupeds, and not particularly pleased with the demolition of sundry portions of the window curtains, behind which the affrighted fair one had taken shelter.

It seems, that at dinner Mr. Fuggleston had perceived a hare upon the table, and by that dumb-show, for which he was particularly celebrated, had given his lady a hint to apply to the cook for the feet of the animal.

The reader will perhaps be anxious to know why?—he shall, therefore, be enlightened. The foot of a hare is the instrument (if it may so be termed,) with which paint is applied to the

cheeks of players, in the operation of what they call "making their faces" for the stage; little bits of burnt cork, Indian ink in saucers, camel-hair pencils, pieces of chalk and whitening, are also in requisition for the purpose; but the hare's-foot is a professional *sine qua non*, the most important part of the stock in trade, and the opportunity of thus securing four paws at once, was much too favourable to be overlooked by the provident Thespian.

Mrs. Fuggleston made the request as desired, and secured the prize; but, with all her accomplishments, she was not sufficiently a sportswoman to anticipate detection by the dogs, which, as Fuggleston said—

"Nosed her in the lobby,"

and gave tongue to what she meant to have kept secret.

The agitation of the lady, however, did not by any means subside, when the dogs and her husband were gone; for as if smitten by lightning, they had scarcely vanished, when she rushed out after them; she having recollected in an instant after she had surrendered her bag, that it contained, besides her handkerchief and

smelling bottle, a note or two, which she had no desire should meet the eye of her indulgent husband. They formed part of a platonic correspondence, which she was carrying on with a half-pay ensign, at Exeter; the notes in themselves were perfectly correct, and might have been read with approbation by the examiner of plays, and with placidity by Mr. Fuggleston himself; but nevertheless their discovery might have led to explanations, and worries, and disquisitions upon the nature and character of platonic attachments in general; and accordingly she dashed at him, even while he was battling with Ranger in the hall, and carrying off the bag in triumph, rushed up stairs with the precious burthen, and lodged it safely in her travelling trunk, in her bed-chamber.

This adventure created, as might naturally be expected, a prodigious disturbance in the quiet mansion of my hero; and the servants, who had hitherto regarded their master as a staid, prudent, and properly conducted gentleman, never having seen such an exhibition before, began to think strangely of Mrs. Fuggleston; and indeed thus early in their acquaintance with her, seemed to fancy the fault all hers, and think,

in fact, that she was very little better than she should be: thus foolishly are vulgar people led to conclusions, by premises which they do not comprehend: the innocent liveliness of the lovely Amelrosa, was misconstrued in the servant's hall, into unbecoming levity, and the rapid flight of the affrighted wife, into the romping rudeness of a bold-faced wanton. This only shews how people may be mistaken.

"Oh, Mr. Skinner," said the lady, when she returned half-breathless to the drawing-room, and endeavouring if possible to get rid of any needless allusion to the past adventure, "Oh, Mr. Skinner, I have a lecture to give *you*."

"Then, Ma'am," said Gervase, "depend upon it, it will have its effect."

"Then I'll tell you," replied the lady, "your housemaid is too pretty."

"Do you think so?" said Gervase, who rather piqued himself upon the good looks of his establishment.

"I never like to see pretty servants," said Mrs. Fuggleston, "particularly in a single gentleman's house."

"Nor any where else," said Kekewich, in an under tone, to his son, who in his heart hated the

Fugglestons, although his conduct towards them was sycophancy double refined.

"I like being surrounded by good-looking people," said Skinner. "I don't know how it is, but a man feels, by reflection, good-looking himself, when every thing round him is handsome."

"*You* need no such illusion, Mr. Skinner," said the lady.

"Pretty well, I thank you, Ma'am," said Fuggleston, in a stage whisper, "how do *you* do?"

Skinner blushed crimson.

"I know what I should do," said the lady, "if I were Mr. Skinner—I say nothing—but beauty, like every thing else, may be misplaced."

"So may advice, my love," said Fuggleston.

'Advise yourself,'

as Edmund has it."

"I can assure you, Mrs. Fuggleston," said Skinner, "that your suggestions shall be law, for I am sure you have a reason for every thing you say."

"And a motive for every thing she does," whispered Kekewich, senior, to Kekewich, junior.

"No doubt," said Fuggleston, "Mrs. F.

'Hath reasons strong and forcible,'

but I cannot help thinking, my love, that Mr. Skinner is the best judge of what he likes best; and that it smatters something of presumption to dictate ——"

"——Dictate, my dear," exclaimed the lady, "I did not think of such a thing; I only suggested: did I, Mrs. Mac?"

This speech was accompanied by a look to her crony, Mrs. Mac Brisket, which was answered by a look from that lady, which at once unsettled Skinner's security of mind, as to the propriety of his servants, and their conduct; for such is the artfulness of a cunning under-bred woman, that she can contrive, without saying a word likely to commit herself, to agitate and disquiet in a moment, minds which for years before, have been as calm and as placid as mill-pools. What her object was, every body may guess; how the whole fabric of her scheming was suddenly overturned, as yet remains to be developed.

The evening wore on, and a round game was proposed. Mrs. Fuggleston would be Mr. Skin-

ner's banker, and they joined their little stock of fish, and she peeped into Kekewich's hand, and played accordingly, and trod upon Skinner's toe when he was going to play wrong; and in short, practised such manœuvres, as might have subjected her, and her new favourite, to the pains and penalties of a bill of indictment, had the cash, of which their joint efforts conduced to despoil the rest of the company, amounted to any sum of sufficient importance to render such a process advisable. Indeed, the coupled facts that the master of the house and his fair friend, sat next each other, and scarcely ever were "loo'd," while all the rest of the party suffered in turn, did not pass without some sly observations on the part of Mr. Kekewich, and some more home remarks from Mr. Fuggleston; however, as he, who saw no farther than he chose, considered that the moiety of the profits, (probably the whole,) of the card-partnership of Gervase and Amelrosa, would find its way into the pocket of his better half, he looked on with complacency, and contented himself by playing cautiously, and thus contributing as little as possible to the amount of plunder.

After cards, came a good substantial supper,

at which the worthy guests exerted themselves with great activity; and after supper, came brandy, rum, and hollands, tumblers, sugar, lemons, (on this special occasion,) nutmegs and all the et ceteras of punch-making, the task of "brewing" was assigned to Mr. Fuggleston, who accordingly prepared a copious jorum of the smoking beverage.

"Here," said the wag, "here are the

'White spirits,
Red spirits and grey,'

and those who don't like my punch-making, mix for themselves

'Mingle, mingle, mingle,
You that mingle may.'"

And accordingly the whole bevy was in motion, all stirring, and filling, and mixing, and drinking; until at last the sweet intercourse of eyes between Gervase and the actress, became too evident for even Fuggleston to wink at.

"Come, Mrs. F." said her spouse, "'tis

'Time enough to go to bed with a candle,'

as the carrier says."

"I obey, Sir," replied the lady, answering, with her eyes, that Mr. Skinner's liberal potations had somewhat too rapidly forwarded his familiarity. "Come, Mrs. Mac B. 'To bed, to bed.'"

"One moment, my dear," said the lady, who always had something in her glass to finish, when called away in a hurry; and hastily swallowing the remnant of her "drink," she prepared to follow her leader.

In their separation for the night, sundry very expressive looks were interchanged between the principal performers; and after half an hour's farther sitting, and the consumption of a few more glasses of their favourite liquor, the gentlemen retired, perfectly satisfied that Skinner was one of the best tempered, most liberal fellows in all Somersetshire; he being at the same period fully assured, that if ever divinity dwelt upon earth, it had visited this lower world in the person of Mrs. Amelrosa Fuggleston.

CHAPTER IV.

He owns 'tis prudence, ever and anon,
To smooth his careful brow, to let his purse
Ope to a sixpence's diameter.
He likes our ways; he owns the ways of wit
Are ways of pleasure, and deserve regard.
True, we are daiuty good society.

SHENSTONE.

SKINNER, who, unlike the lovers of romance, had slept soundly during the night, arose at his accustomed hour, feverish and thirsty, and bowed down with a severe head-ache, the natural result of his recent excess; but he failed not to examine and investigate, long before his guests were stirring, the record of the havoc made amongst his wine—the sight of this return of killed and wounded was by no means pleasant, but he had a superior object in view for the moment, and began considering how, and in what manner, he should set about ingratiating himself with his beautiful Thalia.

His first step was instantly to dismiss Fanny, the pretty housemaid—to have it imagined by Mrs. Fuggleston that he could be interested about any thing so coarse and common as a servant, was worse than death to him; and how dreadfully shocking it must be to a female of such extraordinary delicacy and talent as she was, to fancy for a moment, the possibility of being brought into competition in his affection with a dirty spider-brusher, whose coarse red and white, fair and beautiful as nature made it, the accomplished actress had likened, after the fashion of her gastronomic similes, to the inside of a shoulder of mutton. The removal of Fanny was a measure instantly to be acted upon. She was to be exiled even before the lady descended to breakfast, and to be superseded by Mrs. May, a veteran dame, who had been to Skinner's father, forty years before, what Fanny was at the present moment to *him*—housemaid.

The girl was told by the housekeeper that she must go on the instant—that all sorts of characters would be given her, and three months' wages into the bargain, but retire she must forthwith. The mode in which she received this sudden *congé* was strange enough, as mark-

ing the strength of opinion upon two sides of the same question. She eagerly accepted the dismissal, and declared herself delighted to escape from a place so contaminated as Bagsden was, by the presence of the wanton, to gratify whose envy and jealousy she was about, unconsciously on her part, to be removed. The extraordinary conduct of Mrs. Fuggleston the night before, had actually shocked the poor girl; and she had, strange to say, notified her anxiety to quit the service of her master, character-whole, as soon as possible; apprehensive if he continued to receive such visitors as her hidden enemy, that she should lose all chance of being received into any decent family after her departure from Bagsden.

It was happy therefore to find such a contrariety of feeling, and such an agreement of disposition; and before ten o'clock the pretty Fanny Carpenter was over the lawn, and over the lea, to join her family in Taunton; having, however, before she went, desired the housekeeper to take notice that the old gold snuff-box which formerly belonged to her master's father, and which always stood upon the marble slab in one of the piers between the drawing-room windows, was not in its place that morning when she dusted the fur-

niture; a fact which she was the more particular in communicating, as it had never, during the whole time of her having "held office," been missing from that particular spot.

It must be admitted, that in executing this measure of gallantry, Skinner felt bitterly the additional premium necessary to the quiet dismissal of Fanny, nor did his heart (which was a good one) entirely acquit him of injustice in the proceeding; he consoled himself, however, with attributing the hint given by Mrs. Fuggleston to the very best of motives, and by making up his mind, that although he had never noticed it, there must have been something strikingly indecorous in the housemaid's behaviour on the preceding day which could have called for an observation so strong as that which the lady chose to make, so soon after her introduction to his acquaintance.

But when, after her departure, the absence without leave of his chased and venerated snuff-box, the heir-loom of Bagsden Parva, was announced to him; a box out of which the noses of Johnson, Goldsmith, Garrick, Murphy, and Sir Joshua Reynolds had been fed: a box which had been given to his father by one of the most

eminent men of the golden age in which he flourished; a box which, above all, weighed by an admeasurement faithful and scrupulous as that of the Pix, fourteen ounces, nine pennyweights, five $\frac{7}{10}$th grains, his dismay became too potent for concealment. That Fanny had it not, the housekeeper was ready to swear; she was as honest as the light; nothing—no, not even an often used toothpick had ever been missing during her two years' service; besides, her family and connections were most respectable. All his other servants had lived with him for years. What an extraordinary circumstance then was it, that at the very moment Fanny Carpenter was removed, this precious relic should be removed too. Enquiry the most active, of course, would be entered into; and he desired that every person in the establishment might be closely examined touching its mysterious disappearance.

Some time having been consumed in consultations touching this affair, the worthy guests began to descend, and by ten o'clock the breakfast parlour was filled, the ladies entering together; the face of Mrs. Fuggleston lighted up with an expression of extreme kindness and

affection towards the simple master of the mansion.

"You are a good creature," said she, advancing and pressing his hand fervently; "a hint is not thrown away upon you—I like your Mrs. May amazingly; nice, tidy old body—you understand."

"Well," said Fuggleston, "I cannot say I approve the change so much as you do, Mrs. F.; your May, Mr. Skinner, like Macbeth's—

'Is fallen into the sear and yellow leaf,'

"and looks more like a witch than any one of the Weird Sisters I ever fell in with."

"Gentlemen," said Kekewich, "I am sorry to hurry you in your breakfast, but we are called at eleven."

"Dear me," said Skinner, "I desired you might be called at nine."

"I mean to rehearsal, Sir," said Kekewich.

"I quite dread leaving this sweet spot," said Mrs. Fuggleston.

"As you did leaving Sidmouth, my dear," said Fuggleston, somewhat significantly, as it thereby hung a tale.

"Ah! that beautiful place," sighed the lady, throwing up her eyes towards the ceiling.

"You are fond of the sea, perhaps?" said Skinner.

"I delight in it, Sir," said the lady; "there is something so vast, so mighty in the wide expanse, at times so still, at others so impetuous. It is, indeed, magnificent; and then in dull weather when the billows break upon the beach, it always reminds me of a bottle of ginger beer 'well up.'"

Skinner had before remarked the extraordinary manner in which his fair visitor brought all objects into comparison with those of the commissariat, but at present he was uncertain whether she were really in earnest. As no one laughed, however, he concluded she was serious, and remained so himself.

"We were going, Sir," said Kekewich, after a little humming and haaing, "to intrude upon you, by asking if we might have the carriage to take us down into town?"

"Certainly, by all means," said Skinner; "but are you obliged to go?"

"We must, Sir; it is the only time we have."

"Kekewich," said Mr. Fuggleston, "cannot we proceed to business here. As Quince says

—'Here is a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal—this green plot shall be our stage—this hawthorn brake our tyring house'—

—eh, what say'st thou, Bully Bottom?"

"It must not be," said Kekewich, somewhat significantly; "there's Miss Scarborgh and the other young ladies—"

"—Oh dear no," said Mrs. Fuggleston, hastily interrupting, "we want the properties, and, in short, I must have a stage rehearsal; besides, I have never tried over "The village spire in yonder grove" here, and I must sing it once or twice with the band and the bells. No, no: I petition for the chariot."

"Chariot," exclaimed Fuggleston, "they call your Skinner, Sir, a chariot. Was it—

'—Made by the joiner Squirrel, or old Grub?'"

"Neither," said Skinner; "a man of the name of Stevens built it for me. I knew old Mr. Grubb, of London, very well—but he was a lawyer, not a coach-maker. The carriage shall be quite ready

whenever you wish to have it. I only hope that you will not be so much displeased, Mrs. Fuggleston, with your reception, but that you will repeat your visit, whenever you find it agreeable during your stay."

"Sir, you are very kind," replied the lady; "I shall be but too happy,—whenever Mr. F. and I are disengaged."

"Thank you, thank you," said Skinner; and the ladies retired to "put on their things."

The moment the bright star of his idolatry vanished, Skinner's thoughts were for a moment unchained; and upon the principle so earnestly enforced by Professor Von Feinagle, the instant his eyes glanced towards the pier table, where his antique snuff-box so long had safely stood, his ideas reverted to that favourite object, and he could not help communicating his feelings of uneasiness to his friends, to whom he announced the extraordinary disappearance of the valuable object.

"I can only account for it," said Skinner, "by supposing that some of the labourers I have at work here on my improvements must have entered the room by the window from the lawn, and carried off the prize."

"Yet, Sir," said Kekewich, "this part of the country is proverbially honest."

"'To be honest as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of a thousand,'"

said Fuggleston, looking very oddly at Mr. Kekewich, junior, who was whistling in a subdued tone.

"I find it so in certain points," said Skinner. "I have detected the workmen frequently in carrying off old materials: the other night one of them was marching away with a sack full of lime, which he himself had brought here in the morning; I seized him, however, *in transitû*."

"I conclude, Sir, said Fuggleston, "that when you caught him, you said with Falstaff—

'You rogue, there's *lime* in this *sack*.'

He, he, he!"

The laugh which followed this (to Skinner unintelligible) joke, did not re-establish upon the countenance of the younger Kekewich that agreeable smile which, upon ordinary occasions, illuminated, but which for the last few minutes had totally deserted it. The Skinner meanwhile drove

up to the door, and the party lounged out of the windows to the lawn to examine its construction. Still the younger Kekewich lingered in the dining-room. He had one of his hands inserted into his coat pocket-hole, while he looked slily over his left shoulder; and seemed, as Sheridan said of a much greater and cleverer man, as if he were picking his own pocket. In a few seconds, however, he joined the group, and seemed more at his ease; again he smiled, and again made his pleasing observations upon "things in general."

In a short time the ladies appeared at the hall door, and Mrs. Fuggleston having taken a theatrically affectionate leave of Mr. Skinner, expressed a hope that she should see him at the theatre that night; when she trusted he would be gratified by her efforts, and see Mr. F. to greater advantage than on the previous evening. The rest of the company having also ascended the car, the vehicle moved away, the whole corps having promised to return on the morrow (Saturday), and remain with their kind host till the Tuesday, the next play night. Indeed, so very considerate were they, that they proposed to make an addition to their forces in the person of Mr. Budds, of whom they all spoke in high terms,

none of them having, in their own opinions, any thing to fear from his talents or acquirements.

"Kind hearted creature," said Mrs. Fuggleston, alluding to my hero, as the carriage moved on.

"Prodigious Pump," said Fuggleston, "but his wine is capital, there's no denying the fact."

"There is a good deal of hospitality about him," said Mrs. Mac Brisket.

"He did not relish the tearing of his window curtains," said old Kekewich.

"Nor the loss of his snuff-box," said the young one.

"Did any body take his box?" said Fuggleston.

"La! I suppose not," said Mrs. Mac Brisket.

"I did'nt know," said the wag; "*he* takes boxes of *us*. I thought, perhaps, somebody might have felt inclined to return the compliment—in joke I mean, of course."

"I say, Fug., did you notice the second batch of claret?" cried Kekewich.

"Hush, Mr. K.," said Mrs. Fuggleston, pointing to the servant who was driving, and who was within ear-shot of them.

"I did," cried Fuggleston, in a louder tone; "it was better, if possible, than the first, but both were excellent."

"You divil," said Mrs. Mac Brisket, making a funny face of approbation at the trickery of Mr. Fuggleston, and holding up her hand fist-wise, as if inclined to beat him for his facetiousness.

"It was vinegar, by jingo," added Fuggleston, in a whisper. "I stuck to the port; but I say, Kecky, the best part of the joke came after supper, he was making downright love to my poor little woman."

"La, Mr. F., I'm sure he did no such thing," said the lady; "he has about as much notion of making love, as I have of frying soals without egg and crumbs of bread."

"Fug., talking of that, you dine with us to-day," said Kekewich; "we shall have a chop at the theatre."

"That is by no means gallant, Mr. Kekewich," said Mrs. Mac Brisket; "Mr. Skinner now would not have done that."

"I made a deuce of a spell," said Kekewich, senior, "to get him to give us a blow-out at the castle, but he would not bite."

"No," said Fuggleston, "dense hereabouts, as Caliban says—

'Thou may'st knock a nail into his head, and he not feel it.'"

"Ay," rejoined Mrs. Fuggleston, "but as Stephano says—

'Trinculo, keep a good tongue in thy head; the poor monster's *my* subject, and he shall not suffer indignity.'"

In converse such as this, strongly indicative of the warmest affection amongst themselves, and a common resolution to prey upon Skinner, the corps disposed of time until the carriage drew up at the door of the theatre, where a large assembly of small boys was waiting to see the players go in and come out, as if they were another race of people; and when the present group descended from the vehicle, and entered the play-house, a loud shout of ecstacy burst from the throats of the eyeasses, which fully justified Swift's description in his billet. Even the "Skinner" itself became an object of interest, and the little dunces followed its wheels, to watch the very seats whereon had been placed the mighty magnets of attraction.

It could not assuredly at this period have been foreseen, that upon this particular day, events were to occur in the little world, (the inhabitants of which I have been endeavouring, with all the assiduity, and I hope fidelity of a Parry, or a Denham to describe) which were to create convulsions, revulsions, agitations, and revolutions, unknown to those who live in milder spheres; but so it was—as not only the reader, but Mr. Gervase Skinner, the economist, himself, was destined to discover.

Gervase, who was anxious for a few quiet hours to rally his spirits, and visit like another hero, the fields of victory and slaughter, count o'er the bottles, cast up the bills, and hunt for his snuff-box; ordered his dinner at five o'clock, and the Skinner at six, so that he might, having taken his wonted meal, be in good time at the theatre, to witness the exertions of his amiable friend, who, on this special occasion, was to sing, "The Village Spire in yonder Grove," and delight him with the melody of her voice, and the archness of her acting.

His bottles were soon counted, his cellar-book speedily arranged, his bills were not long settling; and the snuff-box, the great object of all

his calculations, much to his delight, was found behind some books on the table, next to that whereon it usually stood, and where neither it, nor the books which so artificially concealed it, ever happened to be, until this particular day. Skinner, the least suspicious creature upon earth, stifled his feelings, and calmly communicated the restoration of his "pouncet box," to his housekeeper, who, upon the hearing, suggested his locking it up until the comedians had departed. Although ashamed of the doubts which the cautious and worldly matron had created in his breast, he did not disdain to follow her counsel, and accordingly deposited his much-valued trinket in his own bed-room, under the cover of a bureau chest of drawers, inviolable even by the dearest of his friends.

His heart lightened of a burden by the restoration of the heir-loom, he anxiously looked forward to dinner, not that he had much appetite, but because the dinner hour would be near the play-house hour; and as that hour approached, he began sorely to repent that he had not proposed to the Fugglestons to return with him after the play, to sleep at Bagsden, and fell to considering and regretting the various

opportunities of ingratiating himself into the lady's good graces, which under the veil of night would have offered themselves during their progress homeward from the theatre.

At length the sun seemed to grow tired of lighting the earth, and showed an evident disposition to hide himself behind the western hills; servants began to make preparations in the dining-room, and Skinner in his library was reading "The Lives of Eminent Actors," when the bell,—not the dinner-bell, but the bell at the gate, rang a loud and awful peal. Skinner stepped to the window and beheld the Fly belonging to Taunton, labouring out of its element across the lawn, having on its box, with the driver, a female servant, whom in an instant he recognised as the one who had opened the door at Fuggleston's lodgings, the day he called there. As the vehicle approached, he discovered within it, the persons of Mr. and Mrs. Fuggleston; the seats of the carriage being highly encumbered with bags and band-boxes, the top being moreover crowned with a large leathern trunk.

Astonished at the mysterious appearance of the invading party, Skinner proceeded to the hall to welcome his visitors, and inquire the

cause of the happy intrusion; his own idea being that the pastrycook's, where they lodged, or the playhouse where they acted, was suddenly burned down; but his surprise was increased to wonder, when Mrs. Fuggleston, being handed from the Fly by her husband, appeared suffused in tears; her head hung droopingly upon her spouse's shoulder, and Fug. himself was in a state of irritation not to be described.

He seized Skinner's hand, and motioned him not to speak, but to take care of Amelrosa; he obeyed his directions, and supported her to the drawing-room. Having deposited her on a sofa, Fuggleston said—

"Mr. Skinner, are we asking too much, in begging a night's shelter under your hospitable roof? That poor soul; all nerve, Sir, all mind, all sensibility—I never have suffered any thing like this—I can't explain it to you now.—May I tell the servants to take out the things?"

"My dear Sir," said Skinner, looking at the weeping wife on the couch, "may you? pray consider *this* your home."

"Don't stir," said Fuggleston, "don't *you* come out, just look to *her*, poor soul; see, she cries—

—'*I* cannot weep, for all my body's moisture scarce serves to quench my furnace-heart.'

Thanks, Sir, many thanks—I'll manage all the rest."

And so saying, Fuggleston left the room, to superintend the disembarkation.

"Mrs. Fuggleston, Ma'am," said Skinner, approaching timidly, "my dear Mrs. Fuggleston, what has happened?"

"Oh! Sir," said she, (blowing her nose, in the most pathetic manner in which it is possible to perform such an operation,) "I cannot tell you all—I have got such a dreadful head-ache—all mind—all mind, Sir."

"But, Ma'am, what has actually happened?" said Skinner.

"Dear Sir," sighed she, "I have been treated shamefully."

"Bless my soul, Ma'am," said Skinner, "how——"

"Oh, that man! that man! what must his feelings be at this moment; that is, if he have any," sobbed the lady.

"What man?" said Skinner.

"Mr. Kekewich, Sir," replied the lady.

"What has *he* done, Ma'am?"

"Oh, Mr. Skinner, your gentle spirit never could conceive such conduct," said the actress; "my heart is broken."

"Good Heaven!" said Skinner, feeling his hand pressed firmly.

"You haven't dined, have you, Mr. Skinner?" said Mrs. Fuggleston, pathetically, in a weeping whisper, and raising her tear-fraught, dark eyes full upon his face.

'Oh, never mind *my* dinner, Mrs. Fuggleston," said the good natured squire; "I don't care about dinner, I am only anxious about *you*."

"Pray don't distress yourself, Sir," sighed she; "only, I thought I smelt hashed hare;—I never felt a wound till now."

Here Mr. Fuggleston's cough was heard outside the door, as a flourish of trumpets precedes the entrance of a playhouse king; it was clear that he did not wish to surprise the squire in any over-ardent expression of his feelings; but he needed not to trouble himself, for Skinner was so completely bewildered by the representation of tragedy in real life, that he had neither eyes, nor ears, nor thoughts, nor appetite, beyond the immediate griefs by which he was surrounded.

"Mr. Skinner, Sir," said Fuggleston, "your

dinner is ready—on the table—don't let us hinder you."

"You have dined?" said Skinner.

"No," said Fuggleston, "we have not; we have had no heart to dine—and she——"

"But you play to-night?" said Skinner, inquiringly.

"Play, Sir," said Fuggleston, "in Mr. Kekewich's theatre?—play—no, sooner would I die, and see that dear soul die before me, than she or I would ever set our feet upon the infernal stage of this——"

"My dear Mr. F. don't put yourself in a passion," said the lady, "it is of no use entertaining Mr. Skinner with our grievances."

"It is of great use," said Fuggleston, "Mr. Skinner must know the whole story, or how shall we excuse ourselves for breaking in upon him; he must of course hear *that*—

'The which hath something emboldened me to this unseasoned intrusion.'"

"Then, pray let Mr. Skinner dine," said the lady, somewhat recovered.

"Indeed," said the squire, "I ——"

"I really think, Amelrosa," said Fuggleston, looking at his lady in an encouraging manner,

" if you could eat a little, it would do you a great deal of good."

" Oh, Mr. F., how you talk," said the lady.

" Will you come to the dining-room and try," said the squire, who was as hungry as a hunter, " or shall we send you something here."

" No," sighed Amelrosa, " I will try to go with you—society *may* do me good—these things shake me horribly—but we will talk over all that by and bye—I feel as if my poor head were bursting."

" Take Mr. Skinner's arm, Amy," said Fuggleston, " don't let us keep *him*—come, Sir—come."

And so, they went to dinner.

CHAPTER V.

Those evening bells, those evening bells,
How many a tale their music tells.
* * * * *
And so 'twill be when I am gone,
That tuneful peal will still ring on.

THOMAS MOORE.

THE mystery which hung over the destinies of the Fugglestons was not unravelled, until, to gratify the lady, the wine and fruit having been removed to the drawing-room, the said lady having eaten as hearty a dinner as an alderman of fifty years' standing would have demolished; and having, moreover, begged that the dessert might be put down in another apartment, so that she might at once escape the horrid smell of meat, and avail herself of the advantages of a sofa, by lying on which, she might afford herself more ease and comfort, while she killed

Skinner stone-dead with a prospect of her foot and ancle, which, as I have already stated, were extremely delicate and pretty.

But——

"Fools rush in, where angels fear to tread;"

and the whole story had been known hours before, in the servant's hall, through the medium of Sophy, Mrs. Fuggleston's ugly maid, who, having been, for the first time in her life, initiated into a bettermost sort of den for domestics, became, by the aid of sociability and cider, so amiably communicative, that the scrubbers and brushers, headed by Mrs. May, knew, not only the whole of the history of her master's and mistress's present defection from the theatre, but of five hundred other little matters, which, in her soberer moments, Sophy would rather have perished than revealed.

The *denouement* in the drawing-room, however, at length arrived, and Fuggleston, who, in his passion, forgot even to quote, begged the patient attention of his host for a quarter of an hour, and requested that Amelrosa would either go up stairs and lie down, or, at least, not interrupt his narrative; upon the hearing of

which, he was quite sure Mr. Skinner and every man of honour and principle in the world would give a judgment in his favour.

Mrs. Fuggleston, after having shed abundance of tears, promised to keep silence, and her sensitive spouse hastened to begin the detail of the affair in the following terms:

"Well, Sir," said Fuggleston; "I will be as brief as I can—you must, however, excuse what may appear prolixity, for I never—never in *my* life——"

"Don't irritate yourself, Mr. F.," said the lady.

"Pray don't," said the squire; "take some wine, Mr. Fuggleston."

"Well, Sir," again began Fuggleston, "as I was about to say, after we left this morning we went to rehearsal—Mrs. F., the most nervous creature in the world—luckily, upon this occasion, she was so—was most anxious to try over her popular song, 'The Village Spire in yonder Grove,' with the band—well, Sir, the band was there, but one most important person was missing; Mr. Seagrove, our first violin, and the only performer in the orchestra who can play upon the carillons."

"Carillons are little bells," said Mrs. Fuggleston to the squire, with a look of intense interest, and the profoundest sorrow.

"Well, Sir," continued Fuggleston, "I said to Mr. Kekewich—'Kecky, where's Seagrove? because my wife is very fidgetty about 'The Village Spire in yonder Grove,' and wants to see how it goes with the bells'—I never shall forget, if I live a thousand years, his look—God bless me, that I ever could have been deceived for one moment by that man—man, do I call him, I——"

"Now, my dear Mr. F.," said Mrs. F.—"do keep your temper."

"I will, my dear," said the agitated husband—"Mr. Kekewich, you see, Sir, with that shuffling art which I have always suspected, pulled out 'a dial from his poke'—his infernal hunting watch, as he called it, not that he ever went hunting in his life—and seemed, for he did not speak—to imply that he expected Seagrove presently. Well, Sir, so it went on—no Seagrove—did not come—I had not any suspicion of the fact—band played the song—no bells, and Amelrosa and I went home."

"Help yourself, Mr. Fuggleston," said the

squire—who was himself in a dreadful state of suspense as to what had actually occurred to the beautiful Amelrosa.

"Well, Sir," continued Fuggleston, whose grievances had made him doubly eloquent—"about half past twelve I took a walk towards Hull Bishops, just to think over the little part of the Footman which I had to play in the farce, and on my return who should I meet but Seagrove—the very identical Seagrove, with his violin, in a green bag, under his arm:

"'Seagrove,' said I, 'how d'ye do?'

"'Very well, I thank you,' said he.

"'You wer'n't at rehearsal?' said I.

"'No,' says he, 'I am excused.'

"'Excused,' said I, 'by whom——?'

"'Mr. Kekewich,' says he.'

"'What,' said I, 'when you had to try over 'The Village Spire in yonder Grove,' with Mrs. F.?'

"'Yes,' answered he; 'this is an annual affair—Lady Crump, at Dummerton, always has a ball while we are here, in order that I may lead at the dance; by some mistake she has fixed her party for a play-night, and Mr. Kekewich, afraid of losing her patronage, has desired me to go as usual.'

"'And who,' said I, in an agony of despair —'who then is to do the bell accompaniment to the 'Village Spire in yonder Grove,' in the farce?'

"'Gad,' says Seagrove, 'I don't know. I am off for the night, and don't return till to-morrow—where I dine I sleep, and where I sleep I breakfast.'

"'Are you serious, Mr. S.,' said I.

"'Perfectly,' he said.

"'Then,' said I, 'I consider Mrs. Fuggleston one of the worst used women in England—I put it to *you*, Seagrove, as a man of intelligence, a man of the world, a gentleman, and leader of the band, whether any effect *can* be produced in the 'Village Spire in yonder Grove,' without the bell accompaniment?'

"'I am free to admit there cannot,' said Seagrove; whose feelings I saw were hurt by the neglect of my wife's best interests—'but what's to be done?' said he.

"'Return with me,' I said.

"'And disappoint Lady Crump of Dunmerton?' said he; 'I dare not do it—an engagement to me is a serious affair; if I disappoint her ladyship, I risk my situation in the company.'

"'Situation!' said I, 'naturally stung to the quick by the infernal hypocrisy of Kekewich; "I would lose twenty situations were I you, rather than lend myself to so base an enterprise.'

"'At the word base,' continued Fuggleston; 'Seagrove, who is a punster, touched his fiddle, and I saw the quibble trembling on his lips—but he knew his man, Sir, and restrained his ribaldry.'

"'Once more,' said I, 'Seagrove, I throw myself upon your friendship; come back with me.'

"'I dare. not,' said Seagrove; 'the whole dance will be at a stand-still if I disappoint her ladyship—there's Master Potts can play the bells.'

"'Master Devil, Sir!' exclaimed I; 'however, I am not angry with you, Sir; I must settle this with Mr. Kekewich himself. At a moment, when the eyes of all England are upon Mrs. F., at a time when her *debût* in London is at hand, for her to be robbed of the only effective bit in the whole farce, is infamous—there's no other word for it—it is infamous. There is not a telling line in the whole part of Polly Fir-

kins, from beginning to end, but the song, and that, as you know, Seagrove,'—because you see Mr. Skinner, I put it to his feelings in every way—'that song has been encored three times whenever she has sung it.' All, however, was vain; my solicitations had no effect, and we parted. I returned to town, and instantly wrote to Mr. Kekewich—my dear, you have got the letters in your bag, have not you?"

"Yes," said the weeping lady; who immediately produced a copy, made by herself, of the whole of the correspondence which had passed on the occasion between her husband and Kekewich.

Skinner, who, as I have before said, was extremely theatrical to a certain extent; but who had never, till now, witnessed any of the private grievances of public performers—I presume, did not, by his manner, betray quite so much sympathy in the distress of his friends as they conceived them to deserve; for Fuggleston, looking suspiciously at his host, said—

"I don't think, Sir, you quite enter into our feelings upon the point you don't see the vital importance of the bells?"

"Why," said Skinner, hoping to excuse his

want of zeal by the profession of a want of knowledge; "I never heard the song—if I had——"

"Song," said Fuggleston; "my dear, are you well enough just to try it over?"

"I fear not," said Amelrosa; "my head is flying off; these dreadful occurrences quite—— oh dear!"

"They must," interrupted Skinner; "but perhaps, after a little more wine——"

"No," said the lady; "I will endeavour to give you an idea of what the accompaniment does for the song."

And accordingly rising, with all the grace of the theatre, attended by Skinner, who opened the pianoforte, which had not been tuned since the demise of his late respectable father, she proceeded to seat herself at the instrument.

"I don't think I *can*," said the amiable fair one, who had as much notion of playing the piano-forte as she had of flying.

"Do, Mrs. Fuggleston," said Skinner.

"Oh, Mr. Skinner will excuse any little faults," said her husband; and thus encouraged, the lady sang in better voice than she ever did

before in her life, the following little pleasing ballad:—

The village spire in yonder grove,
Its tale of rapture tells:
There Henry plights his faithful love.
Oh! hear the village bells.
Sweet bells,
Soft bells,
Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong.
Fal lal, lal, lira la.
Sweet bells,
Ding-dong bells,
Ding, ding, dong.

My William sails upon the sea,
The breeze his canvas swells,
But when he shall return to me,
You'll hear the village bells.
Sweet bells,
Soft bells,
Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong,
Fal lal, lal, lira la.
Sweet bells,
Ding-dong, bells,
Ding, ding, dong.

"I really cannot sing a note," cried the lady. "Now, Sir," cried Fuggleston; "now, you

have heard the song, now, I put it to you, Sir, as a man of feeling, and a man of honour, and a gentleman, whether there is a single telling point about it without the bell accompaniment. By Jove—well—never mind—now, Sir, you shall hear what I did—where are the letters, my love?"

Mrs. Fuggleston handed her husband the packet. Mr. Fuggleston opened the first letter.

"Now, Sir," said he; "this is the letter I wrote to Mr. Kekewich on my return from my walk."

He proceeded to read—

"'Dearest love, although your obdurate heart'—— Eh! what's this—this is not it—eh!"

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Fuggleston, snatching it, (for she had, in the confusion of the moment, given her husband a letter of her own, intended for the ensign, at Exeter)—"that's not it, my life, that's a copy from Mrs. Poodle's Album."

"I don't know what it is," said Fuggleston, "nor don't care—only, it is not what I want—where are the right letters—what's the use of giving me this cursed thing?"

"Here, dear," said the lady, handing her husband another parcel; saying with the most

perfect collectedness, in an audible whisper to Skinner, as she doubled up her own amatory effusion, "said to have been written by Lord Byron to Lady——"

"—— Well, never mind Lord Byron," said Fuggleston; "nor Lord anybody else—let Mr. Skinner hear this, and then decide whether I have acted injudiciously—this is my first letter, Sir.

"No. 1.

"Friday, half past one.

"'Dear Kecky,'

"I was anxious, you see, Sir, to seem friendly, and keep friends if I could," said Fuggleston.

"'Dear Kecky,

"'On my return from Hull-Bishops just now, I met Seagrove, who tells me he is engaged with your permission, to play at a dance at Lady Crump's, at Dummerton—I cannot credit this, because there will be nobody to accompany the 'Village Spire in yonder Grove:' if he goes let me know, in order that a messenger may be dispatched for him. What time do you dine?

"'Your's, always sincerely, my dear Kecky,

"'J. Fuggleston.'

"To this," said Fuggleston, "I received answer

"No. 2.

"'DEAR FUG.,

"'I ought, perhaps, to have told you that Lady Crump always has a ball during our stay here, and Seagrove always goes to it—this has been done for seven years. She is a great patroness of mine, and I cannot disoblige her—Master Potts has been practising the accompaniment, and I think will be able to do it, if not, the flute can do it equally well. I dine at half past three.

"'Your's, most truly,

"'J. KEKEWICH.'

"The coolness and easiness of this, Sir, were too much for me—and I sat down and wrote

"No. 3.

"'SIR,

"'That every man should consider his own interests is most natural—you will not be surprised therefore that I should consult mine—the absence of Mr. Seagrove will be vitally injurious to those of Mrs. Fuggleston, who will *not* sing 'The Village Spire in yonder Grove,' unless he is sent for to accompany her. I re-

ject the proposition of Master Potts, and I cannot permit Mrs. F. to accept the flute. When I recollect what she has drawn since her first appearance, I am surprised at the terms in which you write.

" ' I am very sorry that a sudden indisposition prevents my dining with you.

" ' I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

" ' J. FUGGLESTON.'

" To which I received, in answer,

" No. 4.

" Theatre, half past two.

" ' SIR,

" ' YOUR letter has surprised me, nor do I conceive after the liberality you have experienced at my hands, that you are justified in writing it. *I have decided*—and if Mrs. Fuggleston dislikes singing the song without the bells, she may omit it altogether.

" ' Your's,

" ' J. KEKEWICH.'

" I did not lose an instant in replying to this, and wrote

" No. 5.

" ' SIR,

" ' IN consequence of your conduct, and the

letter I have just received, I beg to state, that Mrs. Fuggleston and myself have withdrawn ourselves from the company, and shall leave Taunton in half an hour.

" ' I am, Sir,
" ' J. FUGGLESTON.'

" I received the next, which closes the correspondence—

" No. 6.

" ' SIR,

" ' Your last letter I anticipated—the idea of a London engagement has completely turned your heads. I have no power to prevent your withdrawing yourselves from my company, nor any inclination if I had; but rely upon it, the world shall know the whole of the circumstances, and I *may* be a thorn in your side for the rest of your life.

" ' Your's,
" ' J. KEKEWICH.'

" P.S. If you will send your servant girl for the pattens and the leather trunk, and the pot of——' "

" There, my dear," said Mrs. Fuggleston, interrupting him, " you need not read that;

" that only refers to private business. But now, Mr. Skinner, did you ever hear of such heartless conduct? The money I have drawn to that man's house—the trouble I have been at—the pains I have taken——"

" Well, my love, don't agitate yourself," said Fuggleston; " there is no such thing as gratitude in the world—so, Sir, you see, there's an end of our engagement.

' The Earl of Worcester hath broke his staff, resigned his stewardship, and all the household servants fled with him to Bolingbroke.' "

" Lord Worcester!" said Skinner, amazed—" what, has—"

" Oh! that's one of Mr. F.'s quotations," said Mrs. Fuggleston, smiling.

" And *you*, Sir," said Skinner; " are our Bolingbroke? My plan, however, is to go up to town immediately, and I don't know, in the long run, whether it may'nt turn out for the best; we shall have a little more time to look about us and get settled."

" *You* propose visiting town, don't you, Mr. Skinner?" said Mrs. Fuggleston, tenderly—moving one of her feet, as if——

" Shortly," said the squire; " but I shall not

be able to leave this, until the end of next week."

"If you were going at the same time," said the lady, with a sigh.

"Ah, we can't expect that, my love," said her husband. "I think we had better contrive to relieve you of our company, Sir, as soon as we can; but really I did not, at the moment, know where to go to be secure from the intrusion of Kekewich, who is certainly the most impudent, provoking vagabond I ever met with."

"I thought you were such great friends," said Skinner.

"Lord bless you, my dear Sir," said Mr. Fuggleston, "friends with Mr. Kekewich! who could be friends with a man of such disgusting habits?—why he smokes, Sir—didn't you notice too, the quantity he drinks?—friends, indeed!"

At this moment, like a flash of inspiration, one of Skinner's economical projects darted out of his mind.

"I think," said he, "you should not venture travelling in a stage coach, Mrs. Fuggleston, in your delicate state of health."

"Why, Sir," said Fuggleston, "we have so much luggage, and the servant, and so many

little odds and ends, that I really think we must indulge ourselves with a post-chaise to London."

To this point the prudent Skinner had cunningly been trying to draw his visitors. Of all jobs he wanted to compass, that of getting his carriage taken to London gratis, carefully, was the one now foremost in his thoughts—the opportunity of doing a liberal thing to his visitors and an economical thing to himself had arrived; the carriage was to go to the coachmaker's to be newly touched-up, previous to his marriage. Now could he get this matter managed?

"Should you decide upon that plan, Mr. Fuggleston," said Skinner, "I hope Mrs. Fuggleston will allow me to put my travelling carriage at her disposal—it is a most comfortable and convenient thing; and you can direct your post-boy in London, to take it to my coachmaker's when you have done with it, and he will take charge of it."

This shot told—the Fugglestons exchanged looks.

"You are very kind, Sir," said Mrs. Fuggleston, "but how will you get to town yourself?"

"Oh, never mind me," said Skinner, "I can get up any how."

"Really, Sir," said Fuggleston, whose heart swelled at the idea of performing gentleman in real life for a whole journey, "you are too good."

"I tell you what," said the squire, "you can do, which will save you all trouble about the carriage when you get to town: my man, who *must* go to London with me, or before me, can go on the dickey with your maid, if you have no objection."

"None in the least," said Mrs. Fuggleston, "Sophy is one of the most correct creatures in the world, and very plain."

"I did not mean on the score of morality," said Skinner, laughing; "but if the man did not worry you, he might as well go by that opportunity."

The ready agreement to the proposition on the part of the Thespians, quite delighted Skinner, who thus had slily contrived, under the mask of extraordinary courtesy, to get his carriage transported to London for nothing, and by the same opportunity, to send his servant up gratis in the dickey.

This was a little stretch of financial policy which gladdened his heart, and induced him to

beg the Fugglestons to make themselves quite at home where they were, until the Monday at the earliest; a desire of the squire's which they proposed to fulfil to his heart's content, and the content of their own.

The disappointment of Fuggleston and his wife, however, was great, when in the morning they perceived in the Taunton newspaper, which was published on that day, the following account of the defection of Mrs. Fuggleston:—

"The theatre last night was well attended. Mrs. Fuggleston, who acted Ophelia on Tuesday, having taken huff, took leave, and refused to act. The pretty Miss Scarborough assumed her character of Peggy Firkins, in the afterpiece, which she looked beautifully. She was received with vast applause, and encored twice in a song called 'The Village Spire in yonder Grove,' in which an accompaniment of bells was sweetly played by a very young performer of the name of Potts. Miss Scarborough repeats the character on Tuesday."

"Well," said Mrs. Fuggleston, when she saw her husband in the library, "was there much riot?—did they pull down the house?"

"Not so much as a pig's whisper," said her

husband. "There—read—there's the infernal paper—some of Mr. Kekewich's influence—feeds the editor, no doubt—crams him as they do turkies in Norfolk—I don't believe a word of it—there *must* have been a riot. Miss Scarborough, indeed!"

"Yet," said Mrs. Fuggleston, with all the calmness imaginable, "I am very glad she has succeeded so well: all I can say is, that if she sang in tune last night, it was the first time such a thing ever occurred to her: I am extremely glad of it, poor girl; but as for her beauty—how very injudicious over-zealous friends are—never mind, don't speak of it to Mr. Skinner."

"I shall say nothing about it of course—the thing is below my notice," said Fuggleston.

And thus, by a sort of general tacit consent, the whole affair was buried in oblivion; but the calm was, as it usually is, the prelude of a storm, most direful in its threatenings, and tremendous in its consequences.

The party were at breakfast. Mrs. Fuggleston doing the honours, when a note was delivered to my hero; it came from no less a personage than Kekewich, and after remarking upon his disappointment at not seeing the squire at the theatre the preceding evening, begged to

know whether he would be kind enough to send the Skinner down for him and his party, who had by no means forgotten the invitation to visit Bagsden on the Saturday, and to stay there until the Tuesday. In the postscript he mentioned that the Fugglestons had quitted him, and wished to know whether Mr. Skinner would like to see Miss Scarborough, who, under the wing of Mrs. Mac Brisket, would be delighted to join the party. To this was added some remarks upon her personal advantages over the lady then making breakfast, which rendered it quite impossible to shew the note, the consternation created by the arrival of which, was instantly visible in the face of the squire, who had quite forgotten that although the Fugglestons had relinquished their engagement with Kekewich, Kekewich had by no means given up *his* engagement at Bagsden.

It was vain to attempt to conceal the truth, and the scene which ensued was animated enough. Mrs. Fuggleston vowed she would not meet Mr. Kekewich. Skinner declared that although he had unfortunately differed with the Fugglestons, he had known the manager for seven or eight years, had regularly received his visits, and found he conducted himself in a

most proper and gentlemanly manner, and that he could not now put him off from a visit which he had himself invited him to make. Skinner, leaning a little to this side of the question, because he felt that his influence over, and free admission into the Taunton theatre, depended entirely upon the head of the concern, and that if he did not make a stand at the moment, he should, by a show of favouritism, exclude himself for ever after, from the gratuitous enjoyment of his Thespian pursuits.

The Fugglestons saw the doubt and difficulty, and being in truth most anxious to get away from the twaddle of the squire, who, to them, bating his house and hospitality, was one of the greatest imaginable bores; seized the golden opportunity of arranging every thing to the satisfaction of Skinner, and for their own especial convenience, by suggesting their immediate departure for London. It was quite clear that a meeting between the parties would in all probability lead to blows, or some outrage not decent to be committed at Bagsden; and Skinner, though perfectly at Mrs. Fuggleston's beck, seemed more readily to give into the plan than she quite expected, or, to say the truth,

than her vanity quite relished; however, her love was of the worldly sort, she was of Moore's opinion, that—

"Lips though blooming must still be fed;"

and her passions were so well regulated, that a comfortable travelling carriage to London, put in the opposite scale to the "Heavy Plymouth," notwithstanding the actual difference of weight, would undoubtedly have sent the scale of her affections to the convenient level; and the side speech and melo-dramatic acting of her husband, explanatory of his delight at escaping any further discussion, and above all, the unexpected success of pretty Miss Scarborough, at once settled the business. Skinner was all activity to further their expedition, and put an end to needless squabbles, which might endanger his popularity, and put his privileges in jeopardy; and accordingly wrote a note to Kekewich, informing him that the "Skinner" should be down in town at two o'clock, and at the same moment ordered post horses to be up at Bagsden at one, thus hoping to keep the contending parties separate.

It would be tiresome to detail to the reader

all the illustration of character which was exhibited by my hero and his guests during the morning, until the approach of the hour when the carriage actually appeared at the door, the chosen servant ready to attend them, the vehicle loaded with luggage, and the pockets crammed with home-made pickles and preserves, all of which were expended upon the fair one, in hopes of keeping up an interest in her heart, and of atoning to her, for the decision of receiving Kekewich to her exclusion.

Just at this crisis a sort of muttered dialogue commenced between Mr. and Mrs. Fuggleston; there appeared something more to be done, and the question appeared to be, who was to do it. After a good deal of this whispered contention, which was extremely well got up, the lady exclaimed, "Well, then, *I* will," and forthwith proceeded to the other end of the library to Skinner—Fuggleston left the room.

"Mr. Skinner," said the lady, "I am obliged to be orator upon this occasion, for Mr. F. is unable to perform the task—he is so sensible of the favours you have already bestowed, that he is literally incapacitated from asking another; but as I tell him, if his pride last night led him

into an error, he must humble himself to correct it."

"Pray let me know what it is," said squire Skinner, "you may command me," at the same time taking the lady's hand; and at the same moment (recollecting that the library windows opened upon the lawn, and that Mr. F., his servant, or the post-boy, or somebody else, might witness this little innocent familiarity) letting it go again.

"Why," said the lady, "I hate all artifice, all pretence, all 'plating,' as a poor aunt of mine used to say. Truth, Mr. Skinner, is best after all; and I truly believe that I very often incur censure from the openness of my disposition, and the candour of my conduct; for when I am truly attached, I cannot conceal my feelings; as *you* ought already to know."

Skinner's ears tingled with delight.

"The fact is," continued the lady, "Mr. F. is the kindest hearted creature in the world—not suited to me exactly, but, however, excellent in all material points, and proud to a degree, and when you last night offered your carriage for *my* sake—I know it was, you dear kind creature—"

Skinner was quite overwhelmed—

" —He had not the courage to refuse it, which he ought to have done; for the truth, as I have just said, is always best, and he has not the means of paying for post-horses to London."

" Dear me," said Skinner, in the most complete state of amazement, doubt, fear, and agitation, " I had no idea—that is—to be sure—I see what you mean—I—of course—"

" You are a dear good soul," continued the lady, " but you see the difficulty he is placed in; he did not like to say a word about it, because if we had stopped till Tuesday, his agent at Exeter, or indeed, I have a young friend there, who——"

" Mrs. Fuggleston," said Skinner, " you have also a friend *here*, and I beg you will not say another word about it—where is your husband?"

" Never mind *him*," replied the lady, " let *me* be your debtor; I think you may depend upon MY punctuality in repaying the amount; and, indeed, I rather like the difficulty, as I hope you will come and look after your debt as soon as ever you arrive."

" You are extremely kind," answered the squire; " but what am I to do, I have no money

here? I can give you a checque on Woodforde's in Taunton—cashed anywhere—their house is as good as the bank of England."

"That will do, of course," said Mrs. F., who appeared quite *au fait* in the affair, probably because her respectable father had passed the greater part of his life in taking checks at one of the provincial theatres.

"Yes," said Skinner, "but then you have no time to lose, and going up to the bank will be out of the road to London: however, you must manage the best way you can—what will do for you?—name the sum, my dear Ma'am."

"Suppose we say fifty pounds," said the lady, placing her white hand upon Skinner's shoulder, who was seated, and in the very act of doing that, to which shedding as many drops of his blood would, by comparison, have appeared a trifle.

"Fifty!" said Skinner.

"It shall be repaid," said the lady.

"My dear Mrs. Fuggleston," said the gallant squire, "not a word about that: I dare say we shall arrange *that* without much difficulty."

"Oh," said she, affecting to frown, and whispering, "for God's sake, don't talk in that way."

This was more purely Greek to Skinner, than any one of Mr. Fuggleston's quotations; he had not at that moment the slightest idea of what she meant by this private exclamation; however, she had managed to overcome all his parsimony for the moment; the checque was written, dried, doubled up, and in Mrs. Fuggleston's black bag, in less than five minutes.

"A thousand thanks, dear Mr. Skinner," said she, and Skinner was so overcome, either by her kindness or his own momentary liberality, that he squeezed her hand fervently, and quitted the room to see that the carriage was properly prepared.

"Well," said Fuggleston, running in, "have you succeeded?—May

'The mayor towards Guildhall, hie him in all *post*?'

Have you got the money?"

"Yes," said the lady, "a cheque for fifty pounds."

"Right," cried Fuggleston, "as Shakspeare has it,

'Old fools are babes again, and must be used with *checks*, as flatteries, when they are seen, abused.'

"You have done right—well, where is the 'profound' Solomon? turning a jig?"

"Hush, he is in the hall, superintending the packing."

"'Here's packing with a witness;'

said Fuggleston, "as Petruchio says."

At this moment, Solomon, as his kind guests had named him, re-appeared.

"Sir," said Fuggleston, "if our gratitude—"

"Not a word, not a word," replied Skinner, who began to get extremely nervous, lest they should not be fairly away before the arrival of the opposite faction, "merely tell me where to find you in London."

"Why, Sir," said the Thespian, "I am at present uncertain; but at the Harp, in Bow-street, the O. P. and P. S., Kean's Head, in Russel-court, or any of those houses, you will be sure to hear of us."

"Dear, Mr. F.," said the lady, "hadn't you better give Mr. Skinner a more decisive, and at all events, more respectable address—the Stage door of Drury Lane Theatre?"

"Ay, to be sure," said the husband, "exactly so. You'll soon be in town, Sir," said Mr. Fuggleston, again taking Mr. Skinner by the hand.

"Without doubt in a week," said Skinner. "I think you'll find every thing ready now,

and as my servant is with you, he can run to the bank for the cash, and when you get to London he will take charge of the carriage."

And then began a leave-taking, which it would be idle to attempt to describe. John Moody's account of my Lady Wronghead's coach, would have answered for the stowage of the inside of poor Skinner's carriage; and what with wigs, fancy-dresses, hare's-feet, paint-pots, Roman sandals, white-tights, Spanish hats, foils, court suits, feathers, pewter buckles, and blue band-boxes, on the one hand; pickles and preserves in jars and gallypots, on the other, it formed a *coup d'œil*, that nothing was wanting entirely to complete, but the appearance of Sophy Penman, dressed in some of her delicate mistress's cast-off finery, and Joseph Stubbs, in a state of amazement, seated in the dickey, like a shepherd and shepherdess by the side of a pond, on the back of an old fashioned fan.

At length the moment arrived, and the carriage moved from the door, leaving Skinner to cast up his debtor and creditor account with the Fugglestons. The fact that he ever could have been induced to draw a checque for fifty pounds,

seemed incredible even to himself, and came over his mind like one of those apparently impossible things, which occur every day—the sudden death of a friend—the destruction of a fine building—the loss of a ship—a fire—a suicide. A man cannot for some time bring himself to believe in the reality of such great and appalling events: and it was not until he referred to the marginal note (all that was left of it) in the page of his banker's book, that he was disagreeably convinced of the truth. However self was gratified, or was to be gratified, by the sacrifice; and, putting the advantages in perspective, alongside of those actually obtained by getting rid of his visitors, he prepared himself to receive the opposite faction with his usual good humour and placidity,—never forgetting, on the credit side of his book, to put the free passage of his carriage and servant to the metropolis.

Scarcely had he washed his hands and arranged his ideas, before the "Skinner" appeared, loaded with the Kekewiches, Mr. Budds, Mrs. Mac Brisket, and a young lady, who turned out not to be Miss Scarborough, but who was what is called a "funny girl," and made ample

amends for the absence of the heroine, who preferred spending her holidays at her uncle's, the hair-dresser's, where she could with more propriety receive the attentions of a young friend of her's, who was lamp-lighter to the corps.

Skinner, of course, received the party with his usual urbanity, and the day went off much as all the days there did. Kekewich, of course, launched out into the most violent abuse of the Fugglestons; declared that *he* had made their fortunes; that as for Fuggleston, when he first fell in with him, he was acting legs of elephants at three shillings per week, at Exeter; that he had brought him forward; and that, as for her, she was the most artificial, fantastical, hypocritical jade, that ever existed, and that really if it had not been for making mischief, he was a hundred times on the point of shewing her up to her fool of a husband, whom she cheated, tricked, and cajoled every hour of his life, in the midst of all her affectation of virtue, piety, and respectability.

Skinner heard all this, and did not quite disbelieve it; but he could not help comparing it in his mind with the unqualified eulogium which the same man had bestowed upon the same woman

only three or four days before, when the incident of the bells had not occurred; and when the dignity of the lady had not taken fire because Lady Crump and her dance were preferred before her and her song.

I cannot pretend to go through three days of such a life as my poor hero passed in the society of his guests; but true it is, that he was heartily tired of them before the Tuesday morning. This will not appear strange to those who have looked at the world with common attention. Until some person amongst them had started forward, who thought it worth her while to exert herself, to secure the exclusive attentions of the squire, he received the whole community, and rather delighted in the debasement; but now that the leader of the troop, the very heroine of the company, had discovered an advantage in singling out my hero for her trickery, the whole tone of his mind was altered, the mere commonplace jokes of his once entertaining companions proved dull and stupid, and the little gaieties of the flirting females, perfectly insipid. So that he, in the course of the second day, began to wonder how he could ever have relished their society; and although Mr. Budds volunteered an imitation of

a knife-grinder and a steam-engine, he voted the whole affair irksome; and got through it as a child slumbers and sucks oranges through a tragedy to arrive at a pantomime, or takes physic in the hope of securing a lump of sugar after it is down.

On Tuesday, however, the purgatory ended, and on Thursday following, Gervase Skinner proceeded to London, "upon principle," on the outside of the Exeter stage coach.

CHAPTER VI.

"But how is it to be avoided?" said Emma Gray.

"How can it be justly concluded, dearest Emma," asked Frederick Benson: "you have already admitted that you cannot love this man, nay, you have gone further, you have confessed, you———"

"I know it, Frederick," said the lovely girl, "and I have no inclination to revoke my decision, or equivocate on its terms; but consider a moment—had my uncle the power of changing the destination of my poor father's fortune, I should not despair of softening his heart; for he is strongly prepossessed in your favour; and as for my aunt, I am more than half jealous of her, so warmly does she speak of you, in your ab-

sence; but they are mere agents, mere trustees, and my marriage with Mr. Skinner is the condition upon which they are permitted to put me in possession of my own property."

"But you talk of this matter," said Benson, "as if *you* were a trustee instead of the principal. What do I care for the money? I am young, able, and industrious. I am sure if we remove to London, what with my friends, and the success of the works I have already sent to the metropolis, I should obtain an amply sufficient income; and if your uncle and aunt are favourable to our views, what obstacle need interpose?"

"You are too sanguine, my dear Frederick," said Emma: "I did not say that my relations *were* favourable, nor did I even suppose under the present circumstances, that they would be favourable; I merely imagined a case, by putting which I meant you to feel—"

"—— That if every thing were exactly different from what it is," said Benson, "we might be the happiest people in the world. I cannot bear this feverish life of suspense, Emma. I am as you say, sanguine, ardent, and perhaps,

too sensitive; but the state of anxiety in which my devoted attachment to you, and the dread, and almost certainty of losing you, continually keep me, is too dreadful for me to endure. You alone engross all my cares, all my thoughts; and as for attempting to paint, it is useless, unless, indeed, I could employ myself in constantly copying and re-copying your portrait."

"But surely, Frederick," said Emma, "it would be wise to wait until the arrival of my intended husband; although peculiar in his habits, and somewhat strange in his manner (as I am told, for I scarcely recollect him), his heart is universally allowed to be kind; and a man to whom kindness belongs, would never, I am sure, compel the fulfilment of an engagement from which no happiness to himself could arise, and which would plunge two fondly attached beings into wretchedness for life."

"If you think an appeal to him would be effective," said Benson, "I should advise its being made before he sees you—kindness and generosity themselves are often forced to give way to admiration and love; and when once that passion has seized him, all his milder feelings

must yield: write to him, explain the state of your heart, and tell him the truth."

"What should I say, Frederick?" asked Emma.

"Tell him," said Benson, "that accident had thrown you into the society of a person, for whom, upon a more intimate acquaintance, you had conceived an affection; that as you had lived on together, new qualities had developed themselves to encourage that affection, and that, after a lengthened friendship, you felt convinced that it was wisest and best to tell him the real state of your feelings."

"That is, in fact," said Emma, "to state, that having gone to sit for my portrait as a *cadeau* to him, to whom I have been these four years engaged in marriage, I was silly enough to fall in love with the painter, who contrived by his insinuating manners, to get constantly invited to the house of my uncle, whose special duty it was to keep away all suitors from *his* intended bride; and that the said painter, having studiously endeavoured to set me against the proposed match, now desires me to tell him, that *he* being a much more charming creature than

himself, thinks it for my interest to marry him without a farthing in the world, rather than wait for his rival and my own fifteen thousand pounds into the bargain; and at the same time to add, that if he would be good enough to suggest any means by which the said painter and I, might obtain the said fifteen thousand pounds without incurring the disagreeable necessity of marrying the said rival, I should be glad to hear from him by return of post. Isn't it something of that sort, Frederick?"

"I really am in no jesting humour, Emma," said Benson; "I live in perpetual fear—fear of being suddenly excluded from your house and society — fear of this Mr. Skinner's arrival— fear———"

"You are too full of fears," said Emma: "why should you apprehend an exclusion from my uncle's?"

"I do fear it," said the lover, "that Mrs. Grigsby, and those two Miss Holloways, are constantly hinting, and smirking, and tittering to your aunt, whenever I speak to you; and old Holloway is just the sort of good natured friend, who would be sure to explain all his

apprehensions for your safety to your uncle, the moment he could be convinced that we were attached to each other."

"I am afraid, Frederick," said Emma, "that Miss Charlotte Holloway has some stronger reason for her *pique*, than you choose to admit — havn't you been paying *her* some of those delicate attentions, which——"

"Charlotte Holloway!" exclaimed Benson. "Of all the——"

"Stop, stop," said Emma, "say nothing in Charlotte Holloway's dispraise. I beg you will think better of *me*, than to suppose the censure of my female acquaintance gratifying to me. I care nothing for what these young ladies say or think of me. I am conscious of my own rectitude, and I am equally conscious of the justness of my determination, as far as *our* attachment is concerned. I only say to *you*, with your enthusiastic disposition; be calm, confide in *me*, and be assured that nothing short of force, which, in these unromantic days, is not likely to be applied, shall, after having once confessed my feelings to *you*, induce me to marry any man but yourself. That I may never marry, is perhaps probable, because I know

how powerful the opposition to our marriage will be; but, let me entreat of you, take no rash steps—never be out of humour if I appear cold, or formal, or distant to you—never shew your agitation if I seem to listen with pleasure to the nonsense of those whom you fancy your rivals; be for the present my friend, and no more; but, at all events, let nothing tempt you into a declaration of your affection to either my uncle or aunt; —that step alone could justify measures to separate us altogether; and do, pray let me entreat you when in society, to be as cheerful as ever; occasionally move your eyes from *me* to other objects; don't always select the airs I am fondest of, to sing or accompany; and, above all, don't sigh deeply, as you value my displeasure. A lover, Frederick, who has a confidence in her he loves, need only lead a happy life; and if I see any of those sad symptoms which I have enumerated, in your future conduct, I shall set them down to the account of mistrust rather than affection."

"Can we command our feelings?" said Benson.

"No—nor, I hope, would you try to play the hypocrite if you could," said Emma; "but I

deny, after what I have said to you, that you have any pretext for feeling any thing but confidence in my regard, and pleasure in my society; and so, be upon your good behaviour, and let me be upon mine."

This little conversation took place just previous to one of those sociable parties for which the city where the lovers lived is truly celebrated. What effect the young lady's lecture had upon her restless swain, the reader has yet to learn; I merely let him overhear the dialogue in order to afford a datum whereon to found his calculation as to their attachment, or rather a proof of the length to which their proceedings had been carried within the first six weeks of their acquaintance.

We must, however return to the metropolis, to that busy mart, where somebody has said—I am sure unjustly—that every thing is bought and sold. In that vast labyrinth of streets and squares, the amiable Amelrosa and her loving husband were domiciled on the fouth day after their departure from Bagsden.

Where the treasure is, there will be the heart; and as I attempted to describe in my last chapter, the heart of Skinner was no more in his

native home—all the censure of Mrs. Fuggleston's affectation dealt out by Kekewich he set down to personal enmity; all Mrs. Mac Brisket's details of her quackeries and tricks he attributed to envy and jealousy; all the hints and inuendoes of young Kekewich, about her love affairs and flirtations, he ascribed to disappointed passion, and the malice of a confounded assailant. In short, the more they railed, the more he was disturbed, and never felt happier than when he was fairly rid of his visitors.

On the top of the Exeter coach—which, as I said before, "upon principle," he patronised—my hero proceeded on his journey to London, and reached the White Horse Cellar, in Piccadilly, in perfect safety, on the sixth or seventh day of October, but which I cannot at the present moment distinctly recollect.

The nose of Mr. Gervase Skinner being by nature snub, was, at the period of his entrance into the outer coffee-room blue; and his eyes, which were naturally blue, were fiery red;—his fingers looked like frost-bitten radishes, and his feet felt like lumps of ice;—his whiskers (sandy themselves), and that portion of his hair which had transgressed the sheltering confines of his

hat, having evidently (however unconsciously), violated during the journey that imposing command, which, by order of the commissioners of roads, stares one in the face, in large black letters, on large white boards, "not to carry off any of the dust or sweepings from the high-ways, without leave of the surveyors."

"Can I have a bed, Ma'am?" said Skinner, to a lady, who was performing the part of Mrs. Hatchett in the bar.

"I'll see, Sir," was the answer; and the instant jingling of bells, like Roderic Dhu's horn, roused in an instant half-a-score chamber-maids, all of whom having eyed the unprepossessing traveller from the outside of the "Exeter heavy," declared themselves full; until one, a meek maiden, single-minded, perhaps, and single-eyed certainly, and pitted much with the small-pox (as indeed, it was natural she should be), suggested that No. 147 was disengaged—it had no fire-place, "but it was a very comfortable little room for them as didn't mind that."

"That will do, my dear," said the insidious Skinner. "I never have a fire in my bed-room 'upon principle;' and, therefore, there being no

fire-place in No. 147, is rather a recommendation than otherwise."

"So it *is*, Sir," said the superintendant, who appeared as sensibly to appreciate the dignity of wearing a silk gown, and sitting within the bar, as any lawyer does who has not similar privileges—"the wind does draw uncommon strong, down them short chimlies in the hatties when there is not no fire."

"Is all your luggage out, Sir," said a huge man in a scarlet waistcoat, corduroy breeches, and a hairy cap.

"I believe so," said Skinner, "there is nothing but one portmanteau marked G. S. with brass nails, a sac-de-nuit, a hat-box, a dressing-case, and a writing-desk."

"I don't see no sack denwee," said the man, "unless this here green carpet-bag is he."

"That is the sac-de-nuit," said Skinner, "put it here—here, waiter, just take these things up to No. 147."

"I'll ring for John Porter, Sir," said the waiter, somewhat scornfully, "he'll be up in a minute."

"Hope you'll remember the guard, Sir,"

said a jolly looking fellow, enveloped in a coat like the skin of a white bear.

"A guard!" exclaimed Skinner, "what! a guard in the day-time! I never heard of such a thing—I gave the man who came through from Taunton to Hungerford, sixpence, but I cannot give any more, 'upon principle.'"

"Good afternoon, Sir," said the fellow, sneeringly—"here, John Porter, hand up the gentleman's things—you won't get too much for your pains," and away he went, muttering a few heavy imprecations upon my hero's principle.

The tone was given by this worthy; and the porter most unwillingly lifted up the luggage, and plodded his weary way towards the moon, in which direction the dormitory of Mr. Gervase Skinner was placed.

At this juncture, Skinner marched, with an air of conscious importance into the coffee-room; and having taken a general survey of the apartment through his glass, selected the best box, in the snuggest corner, and nearest the fire, in which a cloth was already spread. Having established himself in this enviable position, hung his hat upon a peg, and blown his nose, he proceeded to call for a boot-jack and slippers, and

an evening paper; and having been speedily attended to, threw his feet carelessly on the bench, so that they might as much as possible be comforted by the cheerful blaze from the ample grate.

Just as he had ensconced himself thus agreeably, a most gentlemanly waiter made his appearance, bearing in his hand, a bill of fare as long as a piece of stair-carpeting. Bowing as he advanced, he at length stopped at the end of the table.

"Do you choose dinner, Sir?"

"Dinner," said Gervase, "no, I *have* dined."

This—as far as having bolted two square feet of cold boiled beef, with bread, pickles, and potatoes to match, in fifteen minutes, at Reading, at two o'clock—was true. "But," added he, feeling the ravenousness of a new appetite coming fast and strong, "I'll take something before I go to bed."

The man sighed, bowed, rolled up his bill, snuffed the candles, and retired.

"Waiter," said Gervase.

"Coming, Sir," and again the same waiter stood before him.

"—A—toothpick, if you please."

The man again disappeared, and in a few seconds the public toothpicks were brought, by a minor waiter, in a green glass, in which, ("et *hoc* genus omne,") they were carefully arranged, in order that the vivid hue of the vessel might conceal the colour and accompaniments of their points.

"Give me the play-bills," said Skinner.

Two folio bills, strained upon half-acres of boards, were dislodged from the pillars, against which they hung, and brought to Skinner for his edification.

"Do you know, waiter," said the squire, "when Mrs. Fuggleston acts at Drury Lane?"

"No, Sir," said the waiter; "I never heard of the lady."

"Indeed," said Skinner, "that's very odd."

"We know very little of the play-houses at this end of the town, Sir," said the lad, who began to perceive the sort of twaddler with whom he had to deal, and had already discovered the peculiarity of his disposition and character, which, to say truth, could never have found a better field for display than a London coffee-room.

At this period several worthy persons who had arrived from various distant parts of the country, were actively engaged in eating and drinking. The landlord stood, describing to the inhabitants of one of the distant boxes, a glorious run of the day before, with the Berkeley hounds, when half the horses were knocked up, and half their riders knocked off; and in the midst of all this, the savoury smells, the loud praises of a well-feeding, well-fed gentleman, in black, of a particular cut of beef upon which he was regaling, Gervase Skinner began to wax hungry; but prudence and principle, as they never failed to do, outweighed his animal passions, and he resolved to wait, until with some show of reason, he might order something for "supper," having calculated that it would be charged less than if he ordered dinner; and, moreover, reckoning that wine would not be deemed a necessary accompaniment to the evening's last repast, but which, if he called it dinner, he felt that he could not keep up his proper dignity without ordering. At half-past eight he thought a venial time for supper as a tired country traveller had arrived. Again the waiter appeared before him, like

another Genius of the Lamp, to do his bidding.

"—I should like something to eat now," said the half-famished economist.

"What would you choose, Sir?" said the man.

"Whatever is cheapest," would have been the answer of Gervase Skinner, had he but had the courage to speak out. "What have you in the house?" was the articulated reply.

"We can get you any thing in a few minutes, Sir," said the man. "Would you like some poached eggs?"

"Eggs," said Skinner, "no—not eggs—I think—" He calculated upon the small quantity of actual nourishment contained in a leash, which he knew was as many as he should get. "No, I never eat eggs—I deny myself 'upon principle' —it spoils chickens."

"Would you like some toasted cheese, Sir?"

"Toasted cheese," said the squire, "No, no; at this distance from the kitchen, I would as soon eat luke-warm leather breeches."

"Some escalloped oysters, Sir?"

"Ugh!" said Skinner, with an affected

shudder, " escalloped oysters—children's ears in saw-dust—not I."

" A very fine cold round of beef, Sir," said the waiter.

" Beef!—no," said Skinner, " had a round at Reading."

" A chop, Sir, or a kidney, or—"

" No," said Skinner. " I believe I shall be better without any thing. I tell you what, bring me a crust of bread; and if you have any very good cheese in the house, a slice of that, and some of your London porter."

The man fixed his eyes upon my hero, and wiping down the table slowly said, " Yes, Sir," in a tone which was beyond doubt intelligible to the meanest capacity; after which, he never more appeared to attend on the traveller, who was immediately consigned to the special care of a small boy, studying for an extra waitership.

The bread, the cheese, the porter demolished, ten o'clock had arrived; and Skinner, just upon departing, did his *possible* towards promoting digestion, by calling for and drinking a glass of spring water; having changed the glass, which

the boy brought him, twice, because it did not *look* sufficiently bright, he having as many times mentioned, that he was very particular about his water!

At length, preceded by the monoptic chambermaid before mentioned, he began to ascend, having most courteously bowed to the lady in the bar, (he being, "upon principle," civil to everybody, seeing, as he said himself, that *civility* cost nothing); and having thrown a glance at an extremely pretty girl, whose intellectual organs were deeply buried in a profusion of shining jet-black curls, and who appeared to be a sort of aide-du-camp to the lady herself.

After mounting, and mounting, and mounting, and travelling like another Asmodeus, over the tops of the neighbouring houses, through passages and galleries, the wearied traveller reached his lofty place of rest; and having cast a hurried glance around the ten feet square of dormitory, papered rurally with a vine-leaf pattern, and furnished with a richly flowered cotton bed, he balanced in his mind the propriety, or rather the probable cost of being gallantly lively with the one-eyed chambermaid; and having, upon principle, decided upon being only dis-

tantly civil, he dismissed her with a desire not to be called very early. And having closed his door as well as he could, (for the lock was not in the best possible order, and key there was none,) he began to disrobe, and in the space of half an hour, the world forgetting, by the world forgot, Gervase Skinner fell into a profound slumber.

History does not record the dreams of the worthy Gervase, and the chances are, that he was not much disturbed by them, for he was right weary and heavy to sleep. Nor did he wake until a knocking at the door roused him from his torpidity. He looked up, and saw what the Londoners imagine to be the Sun, trying to shine through the figured window curtains. He started up in the bed—the knocking was repeated—he immediately put a question to the knocker—so common-place, that it may perhaps be superfluous to repeat it; but which, if omitted, might puzzle some of my readers to guess its import—"Who's there?"

"Pray," said a male voice, "is your name Skinner?"

"It is," said Gervase.

"There's a gentleman in the coffee-room making inquiries about you, Sir," said the man.

"What is his name?" said Skinner, guessing directly that it was his friend Fuggleston, to whom he had written the day before his departure from Somersetshire, pointing out the time of his intended arrival in London, and begging him to call on him at Hatchett's.

"I don't know his name, Sir," said the man, who seemed unwilling, considering the distance to the coffee-room, to go without a decided answer; "he is a pale gentleman, with a black neckcloth, a white hat, a brown surtout, a purple velvet waistcoat, and buff-coloured cossack trowsers."

"Ask him if his name is Fuggleston, and if it is, say I'll be down directly," said Skinner.

"If it is he, Sir," said the man, "I suppose I needn't come up again?"

"No, no," answered the squire, "I'll be down at all events immediately."

Forthwith did the anxious traveller rouse himself from his couch, and with all imaginable rapidity, and every disregard for comfort, or even the due observance of habits for which he was proverbial; begin to dress himself, shave at the hazard of a nose, which, though

small in itself, was all the world to him; huddle on his clothes, pull on his boots, and hasten down stairs, so desirous was he, of taking Fuggleston by the hand, and inquiring after his fascinating lady; the kindness of the Thespian, in thus paying him a visit at the early hour at which he had arrived, being perfectly appreciated by the unsophisticated countryman.

When he reached the coffee-room, he found his friend seated in the box which *he* had occupied the night before; on the table of which, were arranged tea and coffee equipages, the cold round of beef mentioned by the waiter the night before, loaves, butter, honey, and marmalade; while egg-cups, *en attendant*, tacitly proclaimed the approach of more nourishment.

"My dear Fuggleston," said the squire, "how do you do?—how do you do?—I am very glad to see you."

"Thank you, Sir," said Fuggleston, "quite well, and delighted to welcome you here,

"'London hath received, like a kind host, the Dauphin and his power.'"

"Indeed," said Skinner; "What! from

France? Well, I shall see him some day, I suppose; but pray how is the lady?"

"Quite well, Sir," said the complacent husband; "and very anxious to see you. We have got a very snug furnished lodging, quite retired and quiet: we hope to get it in order in a few days, and then, Sir, we will endeavour to make you comfortable, as far as a chop, or a kidney goes;—you must let her initiate you."

"Have you breakfasted?" said Skinner, not daring to suppose that the extensive preparations which he saw at hand could have been made for him.

"Not I," said Fuggleston, "but I have lost no time in ordering the necessaries of life. I hope the London air, as they call this yellow fog, will not injure your appetite. As for me, I have got used to the thing, and am as hungry as a hippopotamus. Here, waiter, the muffins and eggs, and some more hot water. Come, Sir, sit down, sit down, and let me tell you of our mishaps, for I am sorry to say we met with some on the journey. By the way, I have directed your servant to you; he will be here at eleven o'clock. I conclude I did right. Waiter, get some cream; this water and milk won't do."

"Perfectly;—but what mishaps?" said Skinner; "no accident, I hope!"

"Sad accident, indeed," said Fuggleston; "but I'll take care and repair it, so you'll never hear any thing about it. Shall I give you a slice of this beef—perhaps you prefer a hot chop?"

"I don't care if I do," said Skinner. "Waiter, some hot chops; but, pray tell me, has she fixed her night for appearing?"

"Why, no," said Fuggleston, "thereby hangs a tale. I did not know that the committee of management was abolished; I thought the power was divided amongst men of fashion, as it used to be some years ago,—they enter into one's feelings so much more readily than your plain, straight-forward men of business. I don't know, in short, when she *will* appear. There has been clearly a misunderstanding somehow; however, she will tell you all herself, Sir. *I* think she has been ill used—you'll hear all in time."

"I'm sorry for that," said Skinner, who at the moment cared very little for any thing beyond what he saw, and who determined, as the breakfast was there, to lay in a good stock of

provision, which might supersede the nonsense of luncheon—" very sorry, indeed, but where is your house?"

" I dare say," said Fuggleston, " you never heard of the place, Sir; it is quite retired, although in the midst of bustle and gaiety, and close to the theatre, which, when she begins to act, will be a great convenience. Martlett-court is the name of the retreat; quite serene—shady in summer, snug and warm in winter—with a pump, watch-box, and chapel, all within itself."

" It must be very agreeable," said Skinner, who having by this time satisfied his hunger, began to feel uneasy as to the expense of the breakfast; " and when shall I visit your residence?"

" To-day," said the actor, " to-day, Sir, if you will excuse our being a little out of order, ' The court's a learning place,' and our drawing-room is in fact our study—but you, Sir, I look upon here,

' As my great patron, thought of in my prayers;'

and any want of ceremony we may shew towards you, you must attribute to the anxiety of

seeing you under our humble roof at all events. What time will you call?—here is my card, Sir, there the number—will you walk down now?"

"Now? I cannot," said Skinner, "for besides having several directions to give to my servant, I have letters to write to the north?"

"Do not," said Fuggleston—

"'Intreat him to make his bleak winds kiss my parched lips, or comfort me with cold.'"

"I mean the north of England," said Skinner, who never could comprehend the point or meaning of any of Fuggleston's quotations.

"Oh," said the Thespian, "I beg your pardon—but I am detaining you—you'll call, perhaps, about two?"

"Say half past two," said Skinner; "will that suit?"

"Whenever you like," said Fuggleston; "but, perhaps you are not engaged any where to dinner?"

"Not I," said the Squire; "where should I be engaged?"

"That's right," said Fuggleston, "we'll be sociable then—what time do you like to dine, Sir?"

"Why, I think about five," said the squire, "if that suits you."

"Oh, perfectly," replied Fuggleston; "then I'll come and take my chop with you at five—now don't have any thing else; all plain and quiet suits my taste."

"I shall be very happy," said the Squire, in a tone, as unlike one of joy as possible; "but—I—if I call on *you*—"

"We can walk up to this end of the town together," said Fuggleston, "or if you prefer calling on Amelrosa to-morrow, I can come up here and breakfast with you, and walk down to that end of the town afterwards: however, come if you like; I shall be at home; and if I don't see you, I will be here at five punctually.—Waiter," continued Fuggleston, "bring me a bottle of soda water, and pray put a small glass of brandy into the tumbler—Don't you do any thing of that sort?"

Skinner, who was now convinced by the free and easy manner in which his kind friend called for all sorts of refreshments, that he, at all events, meant to pay for the breakfast, acceded to the equivocal invitation, and ordered two bottles of soda water, and two glasses of brandy. The whole

being demolished, Fuggleston took his leave, apologizing for having detained the Squire so long, and assuring him that he would not be a minute after his dinner hour in the afternoon.

The exit of Mr. Fuggleston produced a mixed sensation of regret and surprise upon my hero, which it is quite impossible properly to define. He first looked at the door; then at the thickly covered breakfast-table; then cast his eyes about the room, to see if there was any tariff exhibited, by which he could form anything like an idea of the expense in which he was so unexpectedly involved, or calculate, so as at all to form an estimate of the disbursement requisite for the coming dinner. That it was only to be a chop, somewhat soothed his mind; and hope whispered that Mr. Fuggleston would, at all events, pay his share of *that*.

His ruminations upon this point were, however, interrupted by the arrival of his servant, the expression of whose countenance announced some intelligence not of the most agreeable character.

"Well, Joseph," said Skinner, "so you have found me out."

"Ees, Sir, I have, indeed," replied Joseph, "but I havn't gotten no very good count to gi you o' what's been done, since I parted from huom."

"How d'ye mean?" said Skinner.

"Why, zur," said the man, "we were vour days on the road, and its plaguy luckey we a' gotten up so quick as we be; for the lady was so sickly taken, that she was obligated to stop almost every stage, to get some kind of provender; the worst, howsomever, was, that two of them tin zwords, what the board-jumper volks shams to fight wi' on top of stage, poked themselves right through one of the front glasses of the carriage, and in the midst o' the squash, the big jars of pickled walnuts, and red currant jelly, which was stowed away in one of the side pockets, comed all to bits, and such a mess never did I see carriage in, in all my born days; coachmaker says, she must be all new lined, zur, or else she will look for all the world like my poor old mother's patched counterpane."

"That must have been carelessness in the first instance," said Skinner; "who packed them in, Fanny, or——"

"No, zur, you turned poor Fan away, zur;"

said Joseph, "if you'll please to recollect; no, 'twas that ould body, Mother May, put pots in, and I tould her as how I thought they would break, but she won't be spoken to.—No, zur, —if Fanny had——"

"Well, never mind," said Skinner, who in a moment placed all this needless expenditure to the measures he had adopted for economy on the one hand, and out of respect to the fair Fuggleston on the other, "the carriage is safe now."

"Ees, zur," said Richard, "she be safe in Long Acre, bating the broken glass, and the spoiled inside on her."

"I'll call at the coachmaker's myself," said Skinner, "and you had better stop here, now you *are* here, while I stay."

"If you pleaze, zur," said Joseph. "I ax pardon, zur," added he, "if you could pleaze let me have a little money, zur."

"Money," said Skinner, "what d'ye mean about money; why, I gave you twenty pounds when you left Bagsden—what's gone with that?"

"I ha gotten the bill of it all, zur," replied Joseph. "Mr. Fuggleston never had no change

whatzomever about him, zur; so I had to pay vor all the post-horses, boys, gates, and all, zur, till all my money were gone—but I ha gotten it all down."

"Down," said Skinner, "how d'ye mean got it down?"

"On a piece o' paper, zur," said the man, "Mr. Fug, (I call him Fug for short's sake, zur), Mr. Fug bid me put it all down, and zo I did, zur, and here it is."

"Yes, but he should pay you this, not I," said Skinner: "why, I might as well have travelled up in the carriage myself."

"Why, that's just what I were a thinking, zur," said Joseph, smiling. "I only just wanted you to zee he wur all right, zur, and that all my money wur gone, for I ha been obligated to borrow a couple o' pounds o' the coachmaker's voreman, to keep me, loike, zince I ha been here, zur."

"Well, that's pleasant," said Skinner; "however, we'll see about it—Mr. Fuggleston is good enough to dine with me to-day, and I'll speak to him, and arrange all that: in the meantime, wait while I go to my room, and I'll be down presently."

"Ees, zur," said Joseph, who knew enough of his master to see his natural disposition breaking out through the superficial liberality, and was quite convinced that he was in what he *mentally* called, a desperate taking, at the result of his economical arrangements in the journey to London.

But the extent of my hero's mishaps were not yet fully known. In less than five minutes from the time of his disappearance from the coffee-room, he was again in it; his countenance pale, his hair on end, his manner dreadfully agitated, he flew rather than ran to one of the bells, and rang it violently: his original friend, the waiter, appeared; it was some seconds before he could make himself intelligible; but when he did give utterance to his woe, it appeared that his writing-desk, containing not only money, but papers of importance, and documents of value, was not in his bed-room—it was gone—flown—lost!

"I'll make inquiries about it," said the waiter, in a tone of voice, and with an expression of countenance, as mild and as placid as if he was going to fetch a glass of water.

"You had better," said Skinner, agitated proportionately by the inanimation of the at-

tendant; "the property of travellers must be protected in public inns, and I am determined to follow up this robbery 'upon principle,' independently of the actual loss; which, however large, is, with me, entirely a secondary consideration."

"I am very sorry, Sir," said the master of the house, advancing to my hero, "very sorry indeed, that you should have lost any thing; but we will endeavour to investigate the affair; I have sent for the porter—he is here, Sir. Would you like to ask him any questions?"

"One, if you please," said Skinner; "pray, porter, what luggage might you have taken into my room yesterday?"

"What's the gentleman's number," said the porter, turning to the waiter.

"147," said Skinner; "is the number of the room."

"Oh! I recollect," said the porter; "I took up all the luggage there was—a portmanteau, a bag, and a dressing-case."

"—— and a writing-desk," said Skinner, very emphatically.

"No, Sir, I'll be upon *my* oath there was no writing-desk," said the porter.

"I pointed it out to the guard, as he called himself," said Skinner.

"Ah, Sir," said the porter; "I know nothing about the guard—I know what he gave me—I have lived here twelve years, and never was nothing missing, as my master will tell you; but, I——"

"Yes, Sir," said Skinner, losing the natural sweetness of his temper; "but I have lost my writing-desk, and I must have it back."

"I cannot help it, Sir," said the porter.

"What coach did the gentleman come by?" said the master of the house.

"The Heavy Exeter and Plymouth," said Skinner.

"We will apply to the guard, Sir," said the host; "he may, perhaps, know more about it."

"Thank you, Sir," said Skinner; somewhat pacified by the earnest, yet mild manner of the landlord.

"He is gone," said the landlord, "with the coach back to Marlborough, but he will be up again the day after to-morrow."

"The day after to-morrow," exclaimed Skinner; "what am I to do until then?—amongst other papers of consequence, the desk contains

ie principal object of my visit to London, a bill on a merchant's house in the city, for twelve hundred and thirty pounds, due this very day."

"You had better send a notice, Sir, not to pay it," said the landlord, "if it should be presented—the sooner the better, for if the desk be actually stolen, it is the best way to take that precaution immediately."

"I'll go myself," said Skinner; "excellent idea that—I am much obliged—I'll step down."

"You had better take a coach, Sir," said the landlord; "there is no time to be lost; and, meanwhile, I will cause all inquiry to be made in the office below, and everywhere on the premises."

Skinner, who, "upon principle," would have preferred walking on the present occasion, with the fear of a loss of twelve hundred and thirty pounds before his eyes, acceded to the proposition of a carriage, and in less than five minutes was safely littered up in the straw of a hackney-coach, and on his road to the accompting-house of Messrs. Hobbs, Stobbs, Bumble, and Davis, which was located, somewhere in the vicinity of Billiter-square.

During his absence, every search was made,

and every inquiry set on foot; but the results were wholly unsatisfactory. Everybody admitted the bag, the portmanteau, and dressing-case, but with equal earnestness every body denied ever having seen the writing-desk, upon which the monoptic chambermaid, without intending to equivocate, positively declared she never had set *eyes*.

One thing appeared, it must be confessed, a little suspicious—the waiter second in command, to whom Skinner had called somewhat authoritatively to carry his luggage up to No. 147, seemed less anxious and more at ease upon the point than any of the other servants; who, with that restless desire of clearing themselves from any suspicion which might attach to their characters, under the circumstances, gave evident signs of disquietude: nothing, however, was thought of his placidity; and such was his honesty, that no one, not even his bitterest enemy, entertained the slightest notion of his criminality in the affair; his disposition being strong for waggery, his connexion respectable, and his reputation for honesty unimpeachable.

In an hour or two Skinner returned on foot—his first inquiry was about his desk—the answer

was, as he anticipated, unsatisfactory—his second inquiry was, what the legal fare was from the White Horse Cellar to the corner of Billiter-lane, in Leadenhall-street.

The landlord, who felt greatly annoyed at Skinner's important loss, was again at hand, and upon this occasion, suggested three shillings as about the sum.

"I know it is no more," said Skinner; "I know it can be no more—the coachman, however, insisted upon three shillings and sixpence—I refused, gave him three shillings and my card; I did it upon principle—I told him he might summon me if he pleased—the man was perfectly civil; but, it is due to the public in general to be particular; however, *there* I know I am right—and now, what had I best do further about the desk?"

"Would you like to advertise it in the newspapers?" said the landlord.

"I think it would be a good plan," said Skinner.

"I am sure of it, Sir," said the landlord; and accordingly, at his suggestion, an advertisement was drawn up by Skinner, offering five pounds reward for the desk, and describing its

appearance and contents generally—of this, copies were made by different persons of the establishment, and the porter was sent off to the different daily papers, with money, and directions for their insertion on the following morning.

The state of Skinner's feelings may be easily conceived; nor was he better pleased to find it now considerably past two, the hour of his appointment at Mrs. Fuggleston's; for in the midst of all his vexations and worries, still her charms were present to his eye, and the idea that he had engaged her affections, always in his mind; and, accordingly, having despatched the advertisements, dismissed his servant from attendance till the evening, and ordered dinner at five, he proceeded forthwith on a voyage of discovery to Martlett Court, in the purlieus of Covent Garden.

END OF VOL. II.

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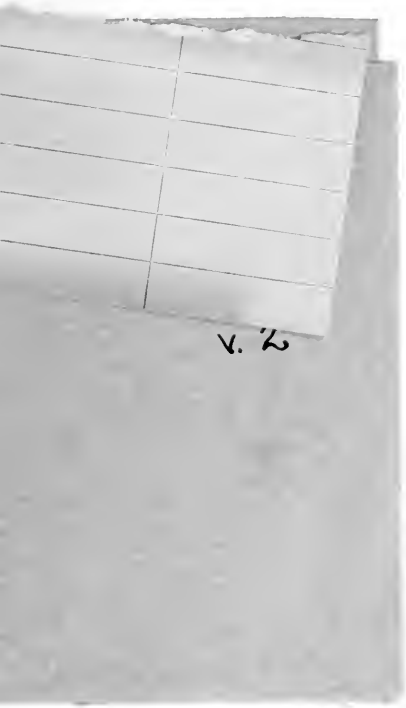

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